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# The Relationship Between Peer-Servant Leadership, Team Cohesion, And Social Identity in Intercollegiate Athletes

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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEER-SERVANT LEADERSHIP, TEAM COHESION, AND SOCIAL IDENTITY IN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETES

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By

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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MASTER OF SCIENCE THESIS

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# DEDICATION

This master's thesis is dedicated to the aspiring servant leaders; those that lead with compassion, humility, vulnerability, and service.

# ABSTRACT

Servant leadership is characterized by a leader's emphasis on serving their followers first (Greenleaf, 1977). The servant leadership model is based on tenets of teamwork and community-building through the involvement of others in decision-making, ethical and caring behavior, and enhances the personal development of followers to achieve organizational goals (Spears, 1998). It has been associated with positive outcomes (e.g., trust in the leader, performance) and may be a more effective leadership style compared to other approaches (e.g., autocratic, democratic). In a sport context, servant leadership has been mostly studied in coaches and has been associated with positive athlete outcomes, such as increased athlete satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Hammermeister et al., 2008; Rieke et al., 2008). However, the impact of servant leadership from a peer perspective (e.g., formal team captains) has been underexplored. As such, the purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between peer servant leadership, cohesion, and athlete satisfaction within intercollegiate athletes. Two hundred and eighty-eight NCAA intercollegiate athletes participated in the present study (female $n = 165$; male $n = 123$; $M_{age} = 19.41$, $SD_{age} = 1.09$) and completed the Revised Servant Leadership Profile for Sport (RSLP-S; Hammermeister et al., 2008), Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ; Carron et al., 1995), and Social Identity Questionnaire for Sport (SIQS; Bruner & Benson, 2018). Structural equation modeling was used to assess the relationship between peer servant leadership, cohesion, and social identity. Results revealed that peer servant leadership positively predicted cohesion, and this relationship was fully mediated by social identity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Proposal Tables



Manuscript Tables

LIST OF FIGURES

Manuscript Figures

# CHAPTER ONE

## PROPOSAL INTRODUCTION

Generally, leadership can be defined as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2017, p. 7). Sport contexts are a domain in which leadership processes are integral for the functions of teams or organizations. For example, a head coach is commonly considered the leader of individual athletes and the team as a whole, and performs managerial functions, such as organizing practice, recruiting future team members, and develop game strategies (Gargakianos, Laois, & Theodorakis, 2003). As such, a majority of research assessing sport leadership has focused on the role of the coach (Chelladurai & Riemer, 1998). However, more recent literature (for a review, see Loughead, 2017) suggests that athletes also fulfill important leadership functions within sport teams.

Athlete leadership is defined as "an athlete occupying a formal or informal role within a team who influences a group of team members (i.e., a minimum of two team members) to achieve a common goal" (Loughead, Hardy, & Eys, 2006, p. 144). According to this definition, athlete leaders occupy either formal or informal roles. A formal role refers to a position that is established by a group or organization (Carron & Eys, 2012). For example, the designation of an athlete as a team captain or assistant captain can be seen as a formal role. Athlete leaders can also occupy informal roles within a team. Informal roles emerge as a result of interactions among group members (Carron & Eys, 2012). For instance, an athlete may be recognized as a leader for their ability to provide social support or mentorship to other teammates, but may not be elected

to a formal captaincy position. Formal and informal leadership positions are important sources of athlete leadership that exist within teams.

Athlete leadership is positively correlated with team dynamic variables within sport teams, such as team cohesion (Price & Weiss, 2011; Vincer & Loughead, 2010) and athlete satisfaction (Eys, Loughead, & Hardy, 2007). First, cohesion has been defined as "a dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs" (Carron, Brawley, and Widmeyer, 1998, p. 213). Generally, literature supports athlete leader behaviors such as providing instruction, social support, and seeking input from peers are all associated with task and social cohesion within sport teams (Price & Weiss, 2011; Vincer & Loughead, 2010).

Additionally, research has highlighted a positive association between athlete leadership and social identity. The social identity approach to leadership (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011) suggests that group members think and act not only in terms of a personal identity (i.e., sense of self as a unique group member), but also a social identity (i.e., sense of self as a group member with shared goals and values) (Fransen, Haslam, Steffens, Vanbeselaere, De Cuyper, & Boen, 2015; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The extent to which a leader is able to influence and mobilize followers toward certain objectives depends on their ability to create and maintain a group's shared social identity (Reicher, Haslam, & Platow, 2018). This notion is supported by recent literature. For example, Fransen and colleagues (2016) illustrated that team identification fully mediated the relationship between perceived leadership (i.e., coach and athlete) and team cohesion (i.e., task and social). As such, this suggests that social is one pathway through which

social identity has an impact on team outcomes (e.g., cohesion). Given that effective leadership is contingent on the ability to build and maintain a shared social identity, it may be helpful to consider how athletes' leaders may embark on creating a sense of "we" and "us" within the team environment.

Team captains, as formal athlete leaders, may be in a particularly advantageous position to help craft a team's shared social identity, because they are often expected to put the needs of their teammates before their own. For instance, team captains fulfill functions, including acting as a liaison between the coaching staff and players, representing the team at external functions, acting as a mentor/role model for other athletes, leading by example, and engaging in supportive task and social behaviors (Camiré, 2016; Dupuis, Bloom, & Loughead, 2006; Mosher, 1979; Voelker, Gould, & Crawford, 2011). Thus, by emphasizing the leader's focus towards serving others' needs (e.g., forging genuine relationships with teammates and coaches), it may be an effective way to increase the positive influence that formal captains have on the team environment. Team captains may display different leadership styles of leadership in this process.

Servant leadership may be one leadership perspective, which is positively associated with both cohesion and social identity due to its emphasis on placing their followers' needs before their own. In particular, servant leadership emphasizes unique leader attributes (e.g., trust, service, humility) that may attend to formal team captains' ability to cultivate a shared group identity, and thus, facilitate positive group outcomes. Originally coined by Robert Greenleaf, servant leadership is characterized by a focus on the interaction between the leader and the follower (Greenleaf, 1977). In this relationship, the primary objective of the leader is to serve first and lead second. Servant leaders place

the needs, interests, and aspirations of their followers above their own (Greenleaf, 1977). The servant leadership model is based on tenets of teamwork and community-building through the involvement of others in decision-making, ethical and caring behavior, and enhances the personal development of followers to achieve organizational goals (Spears, 2002). Integrating tenets of a servant leader style may provide a platform for formal team captains' ability to create a shared social identity, and thus facilitate cohesive team environments and increase teammate satisfaction.

To date, few studies have investigated servant leadership in sport contexts. Hammermeister and colleagues (2008) revealed that higher perceptions of a coach as a servant leader was associated with higher athlete satisfaction in individual and team performance, enhanced interest and enjoyment, stronger athletic coping skills, and higher self-confidence. Furthermore, Rieke, Hammermeister, and Chase (2008) corroborated their findings and displayed that coach servant leadership was also associated with intrinsic motivation and increased mental toughness. Collectively, their results illustrated that servant leadership within coaches was associated with a number of positive athlete outcomes and specifically highlighted central elements of servant leadership including trust, inclusion, humility, and service. However, both studies assessed servant leadership exclusively from a coach perspective. Additionally, the relationship between servant leadership and other team dynamics variables (i.e., cohesion, social identity) remain unexplored. Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between peer servant leadership, social identity, and team cohesion in intercollegiate athletes.

## Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Examine the relationship between perceptions of peer servant leadership and cohesion.

2. Examine whether the relationship between perceptions of peer servant leadership and cohesion is mediated by social identity.

## Research Question

The research questions for this study were:

1. Is there an association between perceptions of peer servant leadership and cohesion?

2. Is the relationship between perceptions of peer servant leadership and cohesion mediated by social identity?

## Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this study were:

1. Perceptions of peer servant leadership will be associated with significantly higher perceptions of task and social cohesion.

2. The relationship between perceptions of peer servant leadership and team cohesion will be mediated by perceptions of social identity.

## Assumptions of the Study

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions were made at the start of the investigation:

1. The sample is representative of an intercollegiate population.

2. Participants answered the questionnaires truthfully and accurately to the best of their ability.

3. There will be perceptions of formal team captains that exhibit a servant leadership style.

4. The study only has access to individuals' perceptions of servant leadership, team cohesion, and athlete satisfaction.

## Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are operationally defined for the purpose of this study:

1. Servant Leadership: There are various different conceptual models that define servant leadership. For the purpose of this study, the definition encompasses Greenleaf's (1977) description that servant leadership is a supportive, ethical, and non-autocratic form of leadership that emphasizes the well-being and personal development of their followers as the highest priority.

2. Athlete Leadership: An athlete occupying either a formal or informal role within a team who influences a group of team members to achieve a common goal (Loughead, Hardy, & Eys, 2006).

3. Formal Leader: A role in which the athlete is prescribed the position from someone in a group or organization (Carron & Eys, 2012). For the purpose of this study, this position is the formal team captain.

4. Informal Leader: A role where the athlete emerges as a leader as the result of interactions among group members (Carron & Eys, 2012).

5. Task Cohesion: The general orientation of a team towards its goals and objectives (Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1998).

6. Social Cohesion: General orientation towards developing and maintaining social relationships within the team (Carron et al., 1998).

7. Social Identity: An individuals' feelings toward importance of being a group member (i.e., cognitive centrality), positive feelings associated with group membership (i.e., ingroup affect), and perceptions of belongingness with group members (i.e., ingroup ties) (Bruner, Broadley, & Côté, 2014).

## Delimitations

The delimitations of the study were as follows:

1. There are multiple instruments that have been created to objectively assess servant leadership. For the purpose of this study, the Revised Servant Leader Profile for Sport (RSLP-S; Hammermeister et al., 2008) will be used. The RSLP-S is used in previous servant leadership studies in a sport and was adapted from a widely used instrument, the Revised Servant Leadership Profile (RSLP; Wong & Page, 2003).

2. In order limit bias and account for different perceptions of captain leadership, coaches will not fill out any questionnaires.

3. Perceptions of leadership, cohesion, and social identity will be assessed from team members only.

## Limitations

The limitations of the study were as follows:

1. Leadership is inherently a dynamic and complex process. Assessing leadership at different time points in the season may yield different perceptions.

2. There are various theoretical models that purpose different characteristics for defining servant leadership. As such, there is not a single objective measure that has been unanimously used throughout multiple contexts (e.g., educational, organizational, sport) to assess servant leadership.

3. The concept of servant leadership has been explored in a limited amount of studies in a sport context (Hammermeister et al., 2008; Rieke et al., 2008) and has only assessed coach leadership.

4. Assessing peer servant leadership is an underexplored area.

5. Results may only generalize to an intercollegiate team sport population.

CHAPTER TWO

PROPOSAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

## Historical Leadership Perspectives

A starting point in organizational leadership theory began in the 19th century when Scottish writer, Thomas Carlyle, popularized Great Man Theory. The theory posits that history has been shaped by "great men", who were born with natural leader characteristics (e.g., charisma, intelligence, wisdom) and innate qualities that grant them a rise into leadership positions (Borland, Kane, & Burton, 2014). Moving into the 20th century, Trait-theory dominated leadership research. Similar to Great Man Theory, Trait-theory attributed an individual's rise to leadership positions to their personality characteristics. In particular, this theory proposes that leaders, compared to their followers, possess certain traits or characteristics that predispose them to emerge and be more effective leaders (Borland et al., 2014, p. 10). In attempt to hone in on specific leader characteristics, Stogdill (1948) conducted a comprehensive review of 124 leadership studies and distinguished five characteristics that were predisposed for a leader's effectiveness: capacity, achievement, responsibility, participation, and status. Stogdill's work (1948) highlighted specific traits that set leaders apart from their non-leader counterparts. Together, these theories suggest that effective leaders arise as a result of personal quality; however, they neglect the context the leader is in.

Further research conducted by Kurt Lewin attempted to fill this gap by taking into account how a leader's effectiveness is contingent on the situation in which they reside. Lewin, Lippit, and White (1939) conducted pioneering research assessing the effectiveness of leadership styles in different "social climates". In their study, individuals

were trained to lead groups of boys in either a democratic style or an autocratic style. A control group was also included, which featured a group of boys paired with an instructor providing no leadership direction (i.e., laissez-faire leadership). Results suggested that the democratic leadership style prompted greater group satisfaction and contributed to more sociable interactions between boys in the group. Conversely, groups led with an autocratic style displayed higher levels of aggression and approval seeking behavior from the autocrat (Lewin et al., 1939). Lewin et al.'s (1939) findings provided evidence for further leadership approaches, which see the situational requirements for behavior as the foundation for leadership behavior. Although situational requirements are important, one must not neglect other contributing factors such as how they interact with characteristics of the leader.

In order to fill this void, Fiedler's (1967) contingency model takes into account both the context and an individual's style of leadership. More specifically, the model proposes that leadership effectiveness is a dependent on the interaction or match between situational demands and the leader's dominant style for providing leadership. The author distinguished between two dominant leadership styles: relationship-oriented (i.e., concerned with interpersonal relations) and task-oriented (i.e., concerned with performance of the task). The effectiveness of a leader's dominant style is dependent on the favorableness of the situation. In this case, favorableness constitutes the leader-follower relationship, the leader's position of power, and the structure of the task. Fiedler's model marked a shift away from a sole focus on either the situation or the qualities of a leader. Moreover, this perspective highlights that any leadership style can

be effective if paired with the right situation, and leaders can change the situation to match their dominant style (Riemer & Harenberg, 2014).

Building from Fiedler's work, House (1971) added two important contributions with the development of Path-Goal Theory. First, House assumed that leadership styles are malleable and can be adapted to fit certain situations. Second, this perspective is primarily concerned with the leader-subordinate relationship, and assumes that a central role of the leader is to motivate followers on the path toward their collective goal. Accordingly, this theory posits that leaders will change the path to a goal based on the motivation and satisfaction of their subordinates (House, 1971). In other words, subordinates will be motivated to participate in goal directed behavior (e.g., weight training in the off season) if they expect it will contribute to a particular valued outcome (Riemer & Harenberg, 2014). In this model, leaders motivate and act through four types of leadership oriented behaviors: directive (i.e., provide structure); supportive (i.e., show concern for needs and well-being); participative (i.e., encourage shared decision-making); achievement (i.e., set high goals and expectations) (House, 1996). As such, the effectiveness of a leader has moved away from unmalleable traits or situations, and has gravitated toward skills or behaviors that must be adapted.

As a result of these historical perspectives, a broader definition of leadership that is commonly referred to is "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2017, p. 7). In this definition, Northouse (2017) identified four integral components to leadership: process, influence, groups, and goals. A *process* indicates that leadership is not a trait or ability, but an interactive engagement between a leader and their followers. *Influence* refers to the effect

that the leader has upon their followers considering they must direct energy to move in a common direction. The *group* or situation provides a context for this interaction to occur. Finally, central to the leadership process, the leader moves individuals toward the achievement of a common *goal*. This definition illustrates the complexity of leadership, which is a multi-faceted and dynamic process between multiple individuals.

## Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership emphasizes the relationship between leaders and their followers. In particular, building on the work of Burns (1978), Bass and colleagues developed the widely used modern conceptualization of transformational leadership (i.e., Full-Range Leadership Theory; Bass & Avolio, 1994). According to this theory, three forms of leadership exist. First, non-transactional (i.e., laissez-faire) leadership occurs when there is an absence of leadership. For example, head coaches could give little feedback or input during practice and let their teams run democratically agreed upon drills. Second, transactional leadership is characterized by an exchange between the leader and follower in order to meet their self-interests. For example, an athlete may exchange a commitment to work hard during practice in exchange for a starting status from the coach. Third, transformational leadership refers to the leader moving the follower beyond immediate self-interest in order to achieve a shared vision or goal of the group/organization. For example, an athlete could talk optimistically about future team goals in order to foster accountability from their teammates in pursuit of those objectives. Transformational leadership theory has gained traction in both organizational and sport contexts. This is largely because of the emphasis on the leader-follower relationship, which empowers followers to achieve goals of the group or organization.

When leading transformationally, the leader attempts to move their followers beyond self-interest in order to achieve a common vision/goal shared by the team or organization. During this process, the leader facilitates the growth of their followers and attends to concerns for achievement and well-being (Bass, 1999). Transformational leadership includes four key behaviors (4Is):

1) *Inspirational motivation* (i.e., creating meaning or shared vision) - refers to the leader's ability to inspire and motivate their followers by providing a sense of challenge, meaning, and purpose. Relationships are built with followers through interactive communication, which leads to a value shift of both the leader and the follower.

2) *Idealized influence* (i.e., modeling behaviors and values) - refers to the charismatic element of transformational influence whereby the leader becomes a role model that is respected, emulated, and develops trust with their followers.

3) *Individualized consideration* (i.e., attending to individuals' needs) - refers to the ability of the leader to allocate personal attention to their followers in order to attend to their need achievement and growth.

4) *Intellectual stimulation* (i.e., encouraging creativity) - refers to the leader's ability to stimulate follower creativity by reframing problems, posing creative and innovative solutions, and approaching old situations in new ways.

As a result of these four leader behaviors, positive group member outcomes (e.g., cohesion, satisfaction) are enhanced because followers sacrifice self-interest for the shared vision of the entire group. In essence, transformational leaders enable self-sacrifice for a common goal by being able to articulate a clear vision, act confidently to

obtain the shared vision, empower followers, and stimulate their followers' efforts. Unlike previous leadership theories, transformational leadership focuses on the relationship between the leader and follower. The emphasis is moved away from specific attributes that make a leader influential and shifted towards how leaders are able to empower followers to achieve organizational goals. Studies using a transformational leadership framework have been used to assess peer leader behavior and will be discussed in later sections of this paper.

## Servant Leadership

In many ways, servant leadership parallels the aforementioned transformational leadership theory considering the focus for the leader is to cultivate a vision, influence, credibility, trust, and service (Bass, 2000). However, servant leadership goes beyond a transformational model by emphasizing the needs of the followers as the highest priority. For example, a formal team captain could invest time developing interpersonal relationships with team members to cultivate an inclusive team climate. Although the conceptual idea was proposed in the 1970's (Greenleaf, 1977), the movement for servant leadership has only started to gain momentum recently (van Dierendonck, 2011). This may be due to the lack of empirical research validating the dimensions of servant leadership, the paradoxical nature of the notion of a servant as a leader, or the lowering of hierarchical leadership structures (Sendjaya & Sorros, 2002). Nonetheless, Bass (2000) argued that, given a stronger empirical foundation, the focus of a servant leadership perspective's link to encouraging follower learning, growth, and autonomy, provides promise in organizational leadership contexts.

The term servant leadership was first proposed by Robert Greenleaf (Greenleaf, 1977). Due to the lack of a consistent definition or framework for servant leadership, one of the most popular working definitions is described as:

"It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then the conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead…The best test…is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they…become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit, or at least not further deprived?" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 7)

Greenleaf's conceptual idea of servant leadership was largely inspired by Hesse's (1956) *Journey to the East*. In this novel, the protagonist, Leo, is a servant to a group of pilgrims on a mythical journey. His role is to perform common chores; yet, he also provides the unique ability to sustain the group with his infectious spirit. However, Leo eventually disappears from the group, and as a result, the journey is abandoned because the group could not persevere without Leo, the servant. Some time later, the narrator of the story finds Leo and discovers that the man, who was once perceived as a servant, was in fact the leader of an order who sponsored the group's initial quest. From this narrative, Greenleaf (1977) emphasized the role of the servant-leader and posited that "the great leader is seen as a servant first, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness" (p. 19).

Servant leadership is characterized by a focus on the interaction between the leader and the follower. In this relationship, the primary objective for the leader is to serve first and lead second. They place the needs, interests, and aspirations of their followers above their own (Greenleaf, 1977). This emphasis is not an emotional undertaking, but is an unconditional concern for the well-being of those who make up the

group or organization (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). Though a servant leader may not place emphasis on organizational objectives, they trust their followers to act in ways that are in the best interest of the organization. Once the growth and general well-being of the followers are met, organizational goals will then be able to be achieved. This relationship between the servant-leader and their followers relies on the assumption that the only way to create change within a society or group is to produce people that are willing and able to create that change (Greenleaf, 1977). In order to achieve a deeper conceptual understanding of servant leadership, there have been various attempts to pinpoint specific servant leader characteristics.

## Characteristics of Servant Leadership

Due to the lack of a uniform definition and conceptualization of servant leadership, there are many interpretations of servant leader characteristics (for a review, see van Dierendonck, 2011). Among the most influential include: Spears (1995), Laub (1999), Russell and Stone (2002), Patterson (2003), and van Dierendonck (2011) (see Table 1).

Larry Spears is the former director of the Greenleaf Center for Servant leadership and is largely credited with adopting the ideas of Greenleaf into a servant leader model. Based on Greenleaf's original writings, Spears (1995) identified a set of 10 important characteristics, which are integral to the development of servant leaders (see Table 1). However, Spears and Lawrence (2002) recognize this is not an exhaustive list, but rather "communicates the power and promise that this concept offers to those who are open to its invitation and challenge" (p. 8). Although these concepts are what characterize an individual as a servant leader, they have never been operationalized or validated in an

empirical study, which makes it difficult to assess in research. Nonetheless, other studies have used these characteristics as a platform from which they developed further interpretations.

Table 1

*Summary of servant leadership characteristics*

| Model | Spears (1995) | Laub (1999) | Russell and Stone (2002) | Patterson (2003) | van Dierendonck (2011) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Listening | Valuing people | Vision | Love | Empowering and developing people |
| 2. | Empathy | Developing people | Honesty | Humility | Humility |
| 3. | Healing | Building community | Integrity | Altruism | Authenticity |
| 4. | Awareness | Displaying authenticity | Trust | Vision | Interpersonal Acceptance |
| 5. | Persuasion within a group | Providing leadership | Service | Trust | Providing Direction |
| 6. | Conceptualization | Sharing leadership | Modeling | Empowerment | Stewardship |
| 7. | Foresight | | Pioneering | Service | |
| 8. | Stewardship | | Appreciation of others | | |
| 9. | Commitment to growth of people | | Empowerment | | |
| 10. | Building community | | | | |

Laub (1999) sought to fill the gap of anecdotal research by developing a list of servant-leader characteristics that can be used as an instrument for assessing the presence of servant leadership in specific organizations. For the basis of their measure, they developed a cluster of six different characteristics, which measure how servant leader characteristics are displayed and practiced in organizational settings. Specifically, this includes how the leader values and develops people, builds community, displays authenticity, and shares/provides leadership. However, due to high correlations between the six constructs incorporated in their model, the dichotomy between dimensions was brought into question (van Dierendonck, 2011). In an attempt to further develop a working model of servant leadership for empirical investigation, Russell and Stone (2002) hypothesized a more comprehensive model that is comprised of nine primary functional characteristics and 11 other accompanying attributes. Functional attributes are described as qualities and characteristics belonging to leaders and observed through specific leader behavior (e.g., appreciation of others) (Russell & Stone, 2002). The accompanying attributes (e.g., communication, teaching, delegation) supplement and heighten functional attributes. However, a critique of this model lies in the vague differentiation between the functional and accompanying attributes (van Dierendonck, 2011).

In order to alleviate the vagueness of certain leader characteristics, Patterson (2003) developed a virtue-based model including seven dimensions. In this perspective servant leadership is defined by an individual's character and doing the right thing at the right time (van Dierendonck, 2011). Though this model captures the essence of servanthood, a shortcoming is the model's lack of focus on leadership (van Dierendonck,

2011). Finally, in order to alleviate confusion that comes with a variety of servant leader models, van Dierendonck (2011) highlighted six fundamental characteristics. It is important to note that caution is warranted with conceptual models for servant leadership because they often times express similar ideas using different terminology (van Dierendonck, 2011). Taken together though, there are different characteristics that define servant leadership, there is considerable overlap among these conceptual models. Their interrelatedness highlights the emphasis on the leader's willingness of service to others and sharing leadership as a way to empower their followers. This sentiment is the heart of servant leadership. It also echoes Greenleaf's (1977) work and has provided a basis through which the qualities of servant leadership can be assessed in empirical research.

## Measuring Servant Leadership

A factor that has contributed to minimal empirical research on servant leadership has been a lack of a measurement tool (Hammermeister, Burton, Pickering, Chase, Westre, & Baldwin, 2008). However, there have been attempts to develop such a model (see van Dierendonck, 2011). Among the most notable attempts to fill this gap are Laub's (1999) development of the Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment (SOLA) and Page and Wong's (2000) Servant Leader Profile (SLP).

Combining a literature review and a Delphi survey completed by a panel of experts, Laub (1999) created the SOLA, which resulted in six different clusters of servant leadership. Factor analysis revealed that the instrument had two underlying dimensions (i.e., focus on the organization, focus on leadership). This reflects the notion that the six clusters were written from three separate perspectives (i.e., assessing the organization, assessing the leadership within the organization, and assessing the participants' personal

experience). Though there were high correlations between mean scores of the six clusters, Laub (1999) concluded that the instrument be recommended for research purposes and can be useful to determine to what extent an organization has a servant leadership culture (van Dierendonck, 2011).

Another instrument that has used to assess servant leadership is Page and Wong's (2000) SLP, and later on, the Revised Servant Leader Profile (RSLP; Wong & Page, 2003). Based on an extensive literature review, their initial model included 12 attributes that encompassed four orientations covering the functional processes of servant leadership. These orientations include character, people, task, and process, and represent the sequence in the development, practice, and influence of servant leadership. The resulting RSLP consists of 97 items that cover 10 subscales. A factor analysis yielded eight interpretable factors now utilized by more than 100 universities and organizations (Wong & Davey, 2007). However, a criticism of the SLP and RSLP lies in the factorial validity (van Dierendonck, 2011).

Subsequent attempts to perform a factorial analysis on the SLP and RSLP (e.g., Hammermeister et al., 2008) found the scales to be only three-dimensional. Specifically, Hammermeister and his colleagues (2008) developed a more mathematically robust version of the RSLP that was adapted for a sport context. They created the Revised Servant Leadership Profile for Sport (RSLP-S), which is a 22-item questionnaire containing three dimensions of trust/inclusion, humility, and service. The RSLP-S demonstrated good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients ranging from .85 to .94 (Hammermeister et al., 2008) and 0.79 to 0.92 (Rieke et al., 2008).

## Transformational Versus Servant Leadership

There is a significant amount of similarity between transformational and servant leadership because both are person-centered styles of leadership (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). Specifically, both theories share an emphasis on the individualized consideration and appreciation for their followers, and integrate similar concepts, such as influence, vision, trust, and modeling behavior (Stone et al., 2004). However, the fundamental difference that distinguishes transformational and servant leadership is the focus of the leader. From a transformational leadership perspective, the primary objective of the leader is to achieve organizational objectives set forth by the shared vision of the group. Achievement of the group's shared vision is dependent on the leader's ability to inspire their followers to sacrifice self-interest in order to support organizational objectives. Meanwhile, a servant leadership perspective emphasizes followers' needs as the highest priority. Only after individual team members' needs for well-being and growth are met will organizational objectives be achieved. The extent to which leaders are able to shift their focus to either the organization or the followers as the highest priority distinguishes transformational and servant leaders (Russell & Stone, 2002). It is from this primary distinction that other conceptual differences arise.

In conjunction with a leader's focus is a leader's internal motivation to lead. In a transformational leadership paradigm, the leader's motive is to lead first. In particular, they are motivated to lead in a way that influences others to achieve organizational success. Comparatively, in a servant leader paradigm, the leader's primary motivation is to serve first (Smith, Montagno, & Kuzmenko, 2004). The notion to serve first, as opposed to lead first, is a unique concept to servant leadership. As a result, it assists in the

leader's role to facilitate the emergence of community within the organization, perhaps because the leader's behavior is associated more with valuing individuals at an emotional level and learning from others (Smith et al., 2004).

In relation to the motivation to lead is the manner in which the leaders influence their followers. Transformational leaders rely largely on their charismatic attributes to influence their followers. Follower growth is not unimportant or undervalued, but individual growth must be related to the success of organizational goals (Smith et al., 2004). Meanwhile, servant leaders gain influence in a non-traditional manner that is derived from servanthood itself (Russell & Stone, 2002). This emphasis on servanthood and service to followers is related to the leader's maintenance of follower growth as the highest priority in the leader-follower paradigm. As a result of the follower focus, servant leaders are put in a position to adequately meet the needs of their followers. This notion is supported by the work of Chiniara and Bentein (2016) who illustrated that servant leadership exerts its influence on follower outcomes through satisfying individuals' core psychological needs. In other words, servant leadership meets followers' need satisfaction for autonomy, competency, and relatedness (Self-Determination Theory; Ryan & Deci, 1985), which, in turn, contributed to increased task performance and citizenship behaviors within the organization (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016).

Furthermore, inherent in both leadership styles is the notion of self-sacrifice. In line with the aforementioned tenets of transformational leaders, the leader motivates or influences their followers to engage in self-sacrifice for the good of the group. For example, a coach could require players to make visible sacrifices for the team, such as setting up or taking down equipment before or after training. This type of behavior may

inspire other team members to also exhibit self-sacrificial behavior. However, from a servant leadership perspective, the leader provides support to others and engages in personal self-sacrifice without an expectation of recognition from others (Smith et al., 2004). There is an altruistic component such that the leader engages in sacrificial behavior because, ultimately, it is for the good of the team. For example, a sport team captain may stay after practice to clean up equipment, not because they are required, but because they feel an altruistic call to invest their time and energy for the good of their team members (i.e., followers). Servant leaders do the dirty work in order to uplift those around them. Through this type of repeated servant behavior, individuals arise into leadership positions (Smith et al., 2004) and may inspire contribution from other team members.

Herein may lay one of the key distinctions between a transformational and servant leader, namely the notion of self-sacrifice. The tenets of transformational leadership highlight the leader's role and ability to influence others. In this way, rather than engaging in personal self-sacrificial behavior, a transformational leader may be more likely to influence their followers to sacrifice to achieve organizational or team goals. In comparison, the core values of servant leadership (e.g., servanthood, service, humility) imply an altruistic calling to engage in self-sacrifice, not because they are motivated to influence their followers, but because the primary motive is to serve first. Through selflessly investing time and energy for the benefit of individual teammates, and the collective team, servant leaders can facilitate a sense of community as well as a shared group identity.

In addition to the conceptual differences, studies have also examined the empirical disparities between servant and transformational leadership (for a review, see Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, van Dierendonck, & Liden, 2019). Together, the evidence suggests that servant leadership explained more of the variance in follower outcomes (e.g., follower commitment) compared to transformational leadership (e.g., Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008). Further, Van Dierendonck and colleagues (2014) investigated the mechanisms, which mediate the relationship between follower outcomes of servant and transformational leadership. They found that while both styles were related to organizational commitment and work engagement, servant leadership was mediated by follower need satisfaction, while transformational leadership was mediated by perceived leader effectiveness. Importantly, a breadth of this research was conducted in organizational contexts, which may limit generalizability to other populations. Nonetheless, this evidence supports the notion that servant leadership and transformational leadership are conceptually different, and thus, warrants the investigation of servant leadership in other leader-follower contexts (e.g., sport).

## Athlete Leadership

Leadership is an integral process to the function of sports organizations. This is especially relevant to those who have a role within sport teams, such as coaches and their athletes. Despite the importance of coach and athlete contributions towards effective leadership in sport contexts, most research has focused on the coach as the primary leader and their athletes as followers (Chelladurai & Riemer, 1998). Coaches take on a managerial role (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980) and perform functions such as organizing practice, recruiting future team members, and developing strategy for upcoming matches

(Gargalianos, Laios, & Theodorakis, 2003). As such, a coach derives power from the position they are in. For example, this can include power that derives from the formal position they hold (i.e., legitimate power), as well power that is derived from their expert skill and knowledge (i.e., expert power; Gargalianos et al., 2003). However, power on teams often belongs to more than just one individual.

More recently, literature has highlighted the important role and influence of athlete leadership. In order to understand the impact that athlete leaders on their peers, it is helpful to review the historical background on the nature of relationships between peers. One perspective for understanding peer relationships is Social Exchange Theory (Kelley & Thailbut, 1978). Generally, this theory posits that individuals engage in dyadic associations to both gain something from a relationship. Hollander (1980) applied this concept of social-exchange to a leadership context. The author argued that the leadership acts as an exchange between the leader and their followers. The leader receives approval via formal status, esteem, and the potential for greater influence, while their followers receive the benefits of the leader's efforts, which produce positive results for the group (Hollander, 1980). This exchange involves the leader's ability to achieve the goals set by the group, as well as foster cohesion among team members. This suggests that leader functions include both task (i.e., focus on achieving goals) and social (i.e., maintaining group harmony, interpersonal relations) roles. As such, leaders are able to influence task goals as well as interpersonal relations within a group.

**Role Differentiation**

A contribution of work by Hollander (1980) is that distinction between task and social functions. This is consistent with Role Differentiation Theory (Rees & Segal,

1984), which posits that leaders fill task and social roles. Task roles involve the achievement of goals determined by the group. Social roles are involved with ensuring group harmony (Rees & Segal, 1984). Rees and Segal (1984) examined the presence of task and social roles with regard to athlete leaders on two collegiate American football teams. Their findings revealed that all of the task leaders were starters, while the social leaders were divided between starters and non-starters. They also found that task leaders were divided between seniors (33%), juniors (56%), and sophomores (11%), while social leaders were primarily seniors (90%).

Similarly, contemporary research has slowly begun to examine what differentiates athlete leaders form their non-leader peers. Consistent with work done by Rees and Segal (1984), one way to classify athlete leaders is by the roles they fulfill. In addition to task and social roles, Loughead and colleagues (2006) noted that research involving athlete leadership focuses on exclusively internal functions, as opposed to including the external environment (i.e., functions outside of practice and competition). As a result, they include a third role of external leadership. In an external role, the leader represents the team's interests in communication with the external environment such as meetings and media functions. This is consistent with work by Mosher (1979), which notes that one role of a team captain is to represent the team at functions such as meetings or press conferences. More recently, Fransen and colleagues (2014) provide evidence for a fourth type, called motivational role. The motivational role integrates interpersonal relationships and encompasses behaviors that motivate and encourage teammates during on field-performances. For example, this can include giving inspirational speeches or

communicating optimism during a match. Taken together, this body of literature illustrates that athlete leaders fulfill a number of leadership functions within sport teams.

**Athlete Leader Characteristics**

Given that athletes can fulfill a variety of leadership functions, other research has focused on determining the characteristics of formal athlete leaders (Loughead & Hardy, 2005; Loughead et al., 2006; Moran & Weiss, 2006). Important prerequisites for being a formal leader have included senior status (i.e., third-year or fourth-year players), being a starter, and being perceived to exhibit a greater extent of social support, positive feedback, and democratic behaviors as compared to their coaches (Loughead & Hardy, 2005; Loughead et al., 2006). Additionally, Moran and Weiss (2006) examined the relationship between peer leadership in sport and personal, psychological, and ability characteristics in high-school soccer players. Their results suggested that greater levels of ability and perceived competence, peer acceptance, and expressiveness (i.e., interpersonal integration of teammates) were associated with being identified as leaders by their coaches and peers. Taken together, both task (i.e., related to achievement of team goals) and social (i.e., related to group harmony) characteristics are associated with athlete peer leaders.

In addition, some research has sought to determine the number of athletes that are present on sports teams (Glen & Horn, 1993; Loughead et al., 2006). Glenn and Horn (1993) suggested that coaches generally depend upon one or two athletes (i.e., captain or assistant captain) on the team to help provide motivation and direction for other teammates. Additionally, Loughead et al. (2006) explicitly studied the number of athlete leaders across three types of leadership functions (i.e., task, social, external). It is

important to note that they make a distinction between team and peer leaders; team leaders were characterized by being identified as a leader by at least 50% of their teammates, while peer leaders were characterized by those who provided leadership to at least two team members. Overall, the majority of task (65%), social (57%), and external (79%) team leaders occupied a formal leadership position (e.g., captain), while peer leaders occupied an informal position for task (66%), social (74%), and external (63%) functions. Overall, their research suggests that athletes may differ in the leadership function they fulfill, which is can also be dependent on whether the athlete occupies a formal or informal role.

**Formal Versus Informal**

Loughead et al. (2006) define athlete leadership as an "athlete occupying either a formal or informal role within a team who influences a group to team members to achieve a common goal" (p. 144). Inherent in their definition is that athletes who provide leadership can occupy either a formal or an informal leadership role. A formal role is a position prescribed to an athlete from someone in a group or organization (Carron & Eys, 2012). For example, a designated team captaincy can be seen as a formal position (Loughead & Hardy, 2005). Specifically in sport contexts, a coach may self-select individual athletes to serve as a formal captain, or they may be elected by a democratic vote including the entire team. Athletes can also occupy an informal role, which occurs when an athlete emerges as a leader as the result of interactions among group members (Carron & Eys, 2012). For example, an athlete may be recognized as an informal leader for their ability to provide social support to other teammates, but may not hold a formal captain role.

In particular, due to the responsibility that formal captains must often assume, some studies have explored the perceived role that captains carry out (Camiré, 2016; Dupuis, Bloom, and Loughead, 2006; Mosher 1979; Voelker, Gould, & Crawford, 2011). In a qualitative investigation of the benefits, pressures, and challenges of leadership and team captaincy, Camiré (2016) interviewed a formal captain of a successful National Hockey League (NHL) team. The results illustrated that in order to be an effective captain, it was perceived that one has to be open to learning, must lead by example through a strong work ethic, act as a team ambassador, and work collaboratively with coaches and teammates. Similarly, Dupuis and colleagues (2006) conducted a study to examine the leadership behaviors exhibited by formal ice hockey athlete leaders. Results revealed three categories of experiences and behaviors, which included: interpersonal characteristics (i.e., communicating effectively, maintaining positive attitudes, controlling emotions); verbal interactions (i.e., facilitating communication between coaches and teammates); and task behaviors (i.e., improving team climate, norms, and functioning). Taken together, these studies highlight specific roles that formal team captains fulfill within their teams.

Despite the influence that these various roles may have, some of the greatest challenges that formal captains report is facilitating the relationships between coaches and teammates, dealing with pressure of responsibility, and managing and dealing with other teammates (Camiré, 2016; Voelker et al., 2011). For example, one captain noted that a challenging aspect of being the formal captain was making sure everyone else was doing okay before a race, rather than being able to focus solely on oneself (Voelker et al., 2011). Though athlete leadership can occur within both formal and informal roles, formal

team captains, in particular, are often tasked with putting the needs of their teammates before their own (i.e., act as servants to teammates). As such, exploring how formal captains effectively serve the needs of their teammates may be an effective way to increase the positive influence that formal captains have on the collective team environment.

## Transformational Leadership in Sport

Traditionally, athlete leadership has been assessed through a transformational lens. For instance, transformational peer leaders possess personal characteristics such as confidence, initiative, and prosocial skills that are typically associated with leaders in sport (Price & Weiss, 2011). In addition, they convey strong values and ideals via leading by example, encouraging problem-solving behaviors within the team, providing feedback on individual team member performance, and encouraging individual contribution to the team's vision (Price & Weiss, 2011). As a result of these characteristics and behaviors, followers elicit greater self-confidence, motivation, satisfaction, and cohesion.

Some studies have investigated the impact of perceived transformational leader behavior upon individual athlete and team outcomes. For example, Price and Weiss (2011) illustrated that perceived instrumental peer leader behaviors were associated with higher levels of social cohesion. Their results demonstrate that behaviors such as providing social support, positive feedback, democratic-decision making, showing care and concern for others, and facilitating relationships are important for developing cohesive teams. Extending their results to include coaches, results by Price and Weiss (2013) suggested that transformational leader behaviors of coaches and peer athlete leaders were positively related to perceived competence, intrinsic motivation, enjoyment,

team cohesion, and confidence. More specifically, when coach and athlete leadership were compared together, coaches' leadership behavior was more influential for individual outcomes (i.e., perceived competence and enjoyment). However, coach and peer athlete transformational leadership shared important relationships with team outcomes (i.e., task/social cohesion and collective efficacy). Collectively, these studies suggest that transformational leader behaviors exhibited by peers and coaches are positively related to individual and team outcomes.

Other literature investigated variables that mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and team cohesion. For example, Smith, Arthur, Hardy, Callow, and Williams (2013) demonstrated that the relationship between transformational leader behaviors (i.e., individual consideration, fostering acceptance of group goals, high performance expectations) and task cohesion was mediated by intrateam communication. As an extension of their work, Cronin, Arthur, Hardy, and Callow (2015) examined whether the relationship between transformational leadership and task cohesion was mediated by inside sacrifice (i.e., voluntarily initiating in, or giving up, an action or privilege for the sake of others). Results illustrated that inside sacrifice mediated the relationship between transformational leadership behaviors (i.e., individual consideration, fostering acceptance of group goals, high performance expectations, appropriate role model, and inspirational motivation) and task cohesion. In other words, when leaders display certain transformational behaviors, they are able to influence their athletes to elicit self-sacrifice for the good of the group.

Central to this perspective is the notion that the formal captain plays a considerable and influential leadership role within their team. Though previous literature

supports this idea (e.g., Voelker et al., 2011), other research argues that it is unlikely a single leader can perform all of the necessary leadership functions within a team (i.e., task, motivational, social, external) (Fransen, Vanbeselaere De Cuyper, Vande Broek, & Boen, 2014). Specifically focusing on perceptions of formal captain leadership, Fransen et al. (2014) demonstrated that the captain was perceived to be the primary leader across all four roles in only 1% of teams ($n$ = 4451). Additionally, approximately half of participants did not perceive the formal captain to be the most important leader, either on or off the field. As such, they argue for a newer paradigm of shared leadership where informal leaders occupy various leadership roles within sport teams (Fransen et al., 2014).

Although leadership is indeed shared within sport teams, there are certain responsibilities and duties of formal captains that often are not often discussed. For example, formal captains are expected to fulfill important social (e.g., help assimilate new players to the team, facilitate relationships) and task (e.g., pick up equipment after training) roles. Inherent in these duties are the recognition of a higher purpose for the team, and accordingly, a willingness to engage in self-sacrifice for the good of the group. Together, these highlight an important, but often neglected, role that a captain may play, which is to build a shared identity within the team (Cotterill & Fransen, 2016). Though, the question still remains how athlete leaders create a sense of "us" within their respective teams.

From a transformational leadership perspective, research has highlighted the role of leader confidence and promoting teammate self-sacrifice in facilitating team identification (Fransen et al., 2015; Fransen et al., 2016) and cohesion (Cronin et al.,

2015). Alternatively, an effective way to promote a shared identity may lie in a servant leader paradigm. A foundational element of servant leadership is prioritizing the needs of the followers as the highest concern. The willingness of a leader to engage in self-sacrificial behaviors without the need for recognition, but rather from an altruistic sense, may be crucial to moving individuals beyond thinking in terms of "I" and to developing a sense of "we" within the team environment. Though servant leadership has recently received increasing attention in organizational realms over the past decade, this paradigm has received much less attention in sport contexts.

## Servant Leadership in Sport

Compared to transformational leadership, servant leadership shifts the primary focus of the leader away from the achievement of organizational objectives toward the fulfillment of follower needs as their highest priority. In particular, servant leadership behaviors are evident in athlete leaders and may be especially relevant for those that serve in formal roles (e.g., team captains). Rieke and colleagues (2008) argue that the dimensions of servant leadership (e.g., empowering and developing others) are applicable to sport leaders because they are often tasked with meeting the needs of the athletes on their respective teams. They note that the servant leader paradigm may fit particularly well for because of the strong potential to influence the emotional, social, and moral development of their athletes (Hammermeister et al., 2008). This concept may apply to peer leadership roles, such as formal team captains, who carry responsibilities such as facilitating relationships between coaches and teammates. However, there is little research assessing servant leadership characteristics in sport settings.

Only few studies have investigated the application of a servant leadership model in sport. Hammermeister et al. (2008) assessed the influence of coaching behavior on intrinsic motivation, use of mental skills, and athlete satisfaction in a sample of 251 collegiate athletes. The results suggested that higher perceptions of the coach as a servant leader was associated with higher athlete satisfaction in individual and team performance, as well as satisfaction with personal treatment and instruction. Hammermeister et al. (2008) contend that elements of servant leadership, specifically, trust, inclusion, humility, and service can promote athlete satisfaction. Additionally, perceptions of coaches' displaying servant leadership were associated with enhanced interest and enjoyment, stronger athletic coping skills, and higher self-confidence (Hammermeister et al., 2008). Overall, this preliminary study provided evidence that servant leadership may be associated with positive athlete outcomes in sport contexts.

In a subsequent study, Rieke et al., (2008) extended the findings of Hammermeister et al. (2008). They examined how servant leader coaching behavior influenced high-school varsity basketball athletes' sport satisfaction, use and understanding of mental skills, and intrinsic motivation. Similar to Hammermeister et al. (2008), servant leader coaching behavior was associated with higher athlete satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, higher task-orientation, and athletes were considered to be mentally tougher than other non-servant leader coached athletes. Specifically, athletes reported higher satisfaction on five different subscales (i.e., individual performance, team performance, personal treatment, training and instruction, and personal dedication) for coaches exhibiting servant leader behaviors. The personal treatment subscale was found to be the most powerful discriminator ($p < .001$, $d = 1.44$) between the classification of

coaches as either servant ($M$ = 31.22, $SD$ = 3.43) or non-servant leader ($M$ = 23.58, $SD$ = 6.61) (Rieke et al., 2008). This may suggest that personal treatment of athletes is a specific attribute that is important for coaches as servant leaders. Taken together, these studies provide initial evidence for the utility of a servant leadership paradigm in a sport context. Specifically, servant leader coaching styles were strongly associated with important elements that contribute to developing strong interpersonal relationships (e.g., athlete satisfaction, trust, respect).

## Correlates of Athlete Leadership

Ultimately, the goal of leadership is to create effective outcomes (e.g., performance, satisfaction). Specifically relating to a sport context, athlete leadership has been shown to influence variables within a team environment. Relative to the purpose of this study, two specific correlates of athlete leadership are cohesion (e.g., Price & Weiss, 2011; Vincer & Loughead, 2010) and social identity (e.g., Fransen et al., 2016; De Cuyper, Boen, Beirendonck, Vanbeselaere, & Fransen, 2016).

### Cohesion

Cohesion has been widely studied in the field of group dynamics. Specifically, cohesion has been defined as "a dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs" (Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1998, p. 213). Carron and his colleagues developed a conceptual model that studies cohesion in sport contexts (Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1982). In this model, there are antecedents (e.g., athlete leadership), throughputs (i.e., cohesion), and consequences (e.g., athlete satisfaction). Importantly, within this model there is a distinction between

dimensions of cohesion (i.e., task and social) as well as the integration in or attraction to a group. The measurement of the group integration-task/social constructs reflect perceived closeness and similarity of the team as a whole with respect to team goals or objectives (i.e., GI-T) and social interactions within the team (i.e., GI-S). Conversely, the measurement of the individual integration-task/social constructs reflect the athlete's attitudes and affection towards the team members and their goals or objectives (i.e., ATG-T) or developing and maintaining social relationships on the team (i.e., ATG-S).

A number of studies have aimed to investigate the relationship between athlete leadership and team cohesion. Vincer and Loughead (2010) assessed the influence of athlete leader behaviors (i.e., training and instruction, positive feedback, social support, democratic behavior, autocratic behavior) on perceptions of cohesion within sport teams. Their results illustrated that athletes who perceived receiving behaviors of social support and positive feedback from their athlete leaders felt both task and socially cohesive with their teammates, while democratic behavior was positively associated with task cohesion and autocratic behavior was negatively related to both task and social cohesion. Similarly, Price and Weiss (2011) examined the relationship of peer leadership behaviors with team cohesion and collective efficacy (i.e., feelings about future team performance). Their results indicated that athletes with higher teammate ratings on instrumental and prosocial leader behaviors were associated with higher levels of social cohesion on their teams. Taken together, behaviors such as providing social support, positive feedback, democratic-decision making, showing care and concern for others, and facilitating relationships are important for developing cohesive teams.

**Social Identity**

More recently, tenets from social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorization theory (Turner & Onorato, 1999) have been used to explain group dynamics and leadership processes in sport. Social identity has traditionally been defined as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from [their] knowledge of membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Bruner, Dunlop, & Beauchamp, 2014, p. 39). Accordingly, the basis of this theory posits that individuals are motivated to maintain a positive self-concept, which is derived from the evaluation of relevant social groups with which they belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). An individual's self-concept is comprised of both their personal identity (i.e., sense of their self as a unique individual), as well as a social identity that is oriented towards group membership. The extent to which individuals self-categorize as a member of a certain group is based on their ability to "depersonalize" from their self-concept as a unique individual (i.e., "I", "me"), and think of the group in terms of a shared social identity (i.e., "we" or "us") (Rees et al., 2015). Previous literature has supported the notion that social identity as important basis for the formation and development of group dynamics (e.g., cohesion) as well as the basis for effective leadership (Rees et al., 2015).

In particular, social identity and group cohesion both share similar theoretical concepts such that they both involve individuals' feelings of attraction or similarity toward group membership. However, Rees and colleagues (2015) argue that groups should disband if they fail to meet the traditional components for cohesion within group membership (i.e., attraction to the group, similarity to group, satisfaction of needs,

benefits to membership outweigh costs; Carron et al., 1985). Rather than seeing cohesion as necessary for group formation, they instead can act as the outcomes of social identification (Rees et al., 2015). In other words, a shared social identity is the basis for group development and ongoing formation, and thus, can result with subsequent perceptions of group cohesion. Previous literature has supported this rationale. For example, Fransen and colleagues (2016) examined the relationship between perceived leadership quality of coaches and athletes, team identification, and team cohesion. They illustrated that team identification (e.g., "I feel very connected with this team") fully mediated the relationship between leadership (i.e., coach and athlete) and team cohesion (i.e., task and social). As such, this suggests that a leader's ability to maintain a shared social identity has important implications for the development of both task and social cohesion within the group environment.

Concurrent literature has provided further support for a social identity approach to leadership. Within this rationale, effective leadership is contingent on the leader's ability to build and maintain a shared identity within the team. The extent to which a leader is able to influence and mobilize followers toward certain objectives depends on their ability to create, embody, and act on the group's shared social identity (Reicher, Haslam, & Platow, 2018). Steffens and colleagues (2014) assessed how a leader's ability to represent, advance, create, and embed a shared identity is related to the group processes and outcomes. Collectively, they demonstrated that a leader's ability to 1) "be one of us" (i.e., identity prototypicality) and "do it for us" (i.e., identity advancement) predicted their perceived influence with followers, 2) "do it for us" and "make us matter" (i.e., identity impresarioship) predicted team confidence, 3) "craft a sense of us" (i.e., identity

entrepreneurship) predicted team identification, and 4) “making us matter” and “craft a sense of us” predicted task cohesion. This is consistent with similar literature, which illustrates that team identification mediates the relationship between leader confidence and subsequent team member confidence (which in turn increased performance) (Fransen, Haslam, Steffens, Vanbeselaere, & Boen, 2015; Fransen, Steffens, Haslam, Vanbeselaere, Vande Broek, & Boen, 2016). Taken together, the formation and maintenance of a shared social identity is associated with effective perceived leadership, team member confidence and performance, and team cohesion. Given that effective leadership is contingent on the leader’s ability to create a shared social identity, it may be helpful to consider specific athlete leadership styles that may lend themselves toward the formation of a collective group identity.

## Methodical Limitations

Though these studies provide a promising avenue for the application of servant leadership in sport, there are various limitations that should be considered. Perhaps the most notable shortcoming is the need for more validated empirical research. To the author’s knowledge, the RLSP-S has only been assessed in two empirical studies (Hammermeister et al., 2008; Rieke et al., 2008) and would stand to benefit from replication in other studies that assess servant leader characteristics and behaviors. In a similar vein, though the RLSP-S may capture essential characteristics relative to servant leadership (i.e., trust/inclusion, humility, service), it only explores those three constructs and may neglect other key dimensions. Furthermore, there is a lack of research assessing servant leadership from a peer perspective. Nonetheless, similar to coaches, athlete leaders are tasked with responsibilities that include building trust from teammates and

coaches, as well as satisfying the needs of their teammates before their own. As such, this provides a rationale for examining the relationship between servant leadership and athlete satisfaction at a peer level. Additionally, though the relationship between servant leadership and athlete satisfaction is briefly documented, there is a lack of investigation of the association between servant leadership and cohesion. Based on the previous literature that illustrates the connection between peer leader behavior (e.g., Vincer & Loughead, 2010) and cohesion, coupled with the interpersonal focus within the servant leader paradigm, there is a strong potential for association between the two constructs. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to assess the relationship between peer-servant leadership, social identity, and team cohesion, in intercollegiate athletes**.**

# CHAPTER THREE

# PROPOSAL METHODS

## Participants

A convenience sample of approximately 300 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) intercollegiate athletes will be recruited. The chosen sample size will provide enough power for the calculation of mediation analysis using structural equation modeling. Participants will be recruited across division levels of the NCAA (i.e., Division I, II, III) in the Northeast region of the United States. Inclusion criteria consist of athletes that are 18 or older and are currently participating in a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sport.

## Procedure

Approval from the Ithaca College Institutional Review Board (IRB) will be obtained before participants are recruited. Collegiate coaches will be contacted via email with a description of their participation in the study (see Appendix A). A convenient time will be scheduled through the head coach or upon gaining permission, athletes will be contacted via email and invited to participate. The researchers will meet with individual teams in convenient locations (e.g., dressing room) and will administer questionnaires to the athletes on each team. Participants will be assured that participation is voluntary and all personal responses will be kept confidential. Participants will be prompted that they can skip any question without consequence if they feel uncomfortable answering them. After obtaining implied consent (see Appendix B), the researcher will remain in the room to answer any questions that arise while administering the questionnaire. Upon completion of the anonymized questionnaires, participants cannot drop out because the

data is non-identifiable. Questionnaires will be collected by the researchers and kept in a concealed location.

**Measures**

**Servant Leadership.** Servant leadership will be measured using the Revised Servant Leadership Profile for Sport (RSLP-S) (Rieke, Hammermeister, & Chase, 2008). The RSLP-S is comprised of three servant leader constructs: trust/inclusion, humility, and service. The scale consists of both a perceived and preferred leader behavior profile. The perceived leader behavior profile consists of 22 items and is measured on a 7-point scale (e.g., "In the last year my head coach serves others and does not expect anything in return") ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The preferred leader behavior profile also consists of 22 items and is measured on a 7-point scale (e.g., "I would prefer that my coach serve others and not expect anything in return") ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scores from the RLSP-S have displayed adequate internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients ranging from .72 to .92 (Hammermeister et al., 2008).

**Cohesion.** Cohesion will be assessed using the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) (Carron, Widmeyer, & Brawley, 1985). The GEQ is an 18-item questionnaire that is comprised of four constructs: group integration-task (GI-T), group integration-social (GI-S), individual attraction to group-task (ATG-T), and individual attraction to group-social (ATG-S). The measurement of the group integration-task/social constructs reflect perceived closeness and similarity of the team as a whole with respect to team goals or objectives (GI-T, e.g., "Our team is united in trying to reach its goals for performance.") and social interactions within the team (GI-S, e.g., "Members of our team do not stick

together outside of practice and games."). Conversely, the measurement of the individual integration-task/social constructs reflect the athlete's attitudes towards the team's goals or objectives (ATG-T, e.g., "I am not happy with the amount of playing time I get.") or developing and maintaining social relationships on the team (ATG-S, e.g., "For me, this team is one of the most important social groups to which I belong to."). Responses were measured on a 9-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree). Previous research has demonstrated adequate internal consistency levels of the GEQ (e.g.,Vincer & Loughead, 2010).

**Social Identity.** Social identity will be assessed using the Social Identity Questionnaire for Sport (SIQS; Bruner & Benson, 2018), which is an adapted version of a three-factor model for social identity produced by Cameron (2004). The scale measures three dimensions: cognitive centrality (e.g., "In general, being a team member is an important part of my self-image"), ingroup ties (e.g., "I have a lot in common with other members in this team"), and ingroup affect (e.g., "Generally, I feel good when I think about myself as a team member"). Responses are measured on a 7-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Previous research has demonstrated adequate internal consistency levels for the three dimensions of social identity (Bruner & Benson, 2018).

## Data Analysis

All analyses will be conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 24). The descriptive statistics and distribution indicators will be calculated. All variables will be examined for normal distribution justifying the use of parametric statistics (i.e., skewness

< 3, kurtosis < 10; Field, 2013). A Cronbach's alpha will be calculated for each subscale to demonstrate adequate to internal consistency.

In order to assess the relationship between peer servant leadership, team cohesion, and athlete satisfaction, multiple regression analyses will be conducted. Variance inflation factor (VIF) scores will be calculated to ensure that that multicollinearity does not affect the results (i.e., VIF < 10; Field, 2013)

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CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH MANUSCRIPT

## Introduction

Generally, leadership can be defined as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2017, p. 7). It is a key component for successful organizational functioning in organizational and team contexts. Particularly in sport, leadership is considered an important factor for team functioning. For example, a head coach is commonly considered the leader of individual or groups of athletes, and performs several managerial functions, such as organizing practice, recruiting future team members, and developing game strategies (Gargakianos, Laios, & Theodorakis, 2003). Due to the nature of a coaching role, coaches derive power from the position they are in. This can include power that derives from the formal position they hold (i.e., legitimate power), as well power that is derived from their expert skill and knowledge (i.e., expert power; Gargalianos et al., 2003). As such, a majority of research assessing sport leadership has focused on the role of the coach (Chelladurai & Riemer, 1998). However, more recent literature (see Loughead, 2017, for a review) suggests that athletes also fulfill important leadership functions within sport teams.

Athlete leadership is defined as "an athlete occupying a formal or informal role within a team who influences a group of team members (i.e., a minimum of two team members) to achieve a common goal" (Loughead, Hardy, & Eys, 2006, p. 144). According to this definition, athlete leaders occupy either formal or informal roles. A formal role refers to a position that is established by a group or organization (Carron & Eys, 2012). For example, the designation of an athlete as a team captain or assistant

captain can be seen as a formal role. Athlete leaders can also occupy informal roles within a team. Informal roles emerge as a result of interactions among group members (Carron & Eys, 2012). For instance, an athlete may be recognized as a leader for their ability to provide social support or mentorship to other teammates, but may not be elected to a formal captaincy position. Together, both formal and informal leadership positions depict important sources of athlete leadership that exist within teams.

**Correlates of Athlete Leadership**

Previous literature demonstrates that athlete leadership has been positively associated with team dynamics. One correlate of athlete leadership is cohesion (e.g., Vincer & Loughead, 2010). Traditionally, cohesion has been defined as "a dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs" (Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1998, p. 213). Carron and colleagues developed a conceptual model for the study of cohesion, which is comprised of: antecedents (e.g., athlete leadership), throughputs (i.e., cohesion), and consequences (e.g., athlete satisfaction). Importantly, within this model there is a distinction between dimensions of cohesion (i.e., task and social) as well as the integration in or attraction to a group. The measurement of the group integration-task/social constructs reflect perceived closeness and similarity of the team as a whole with respect to team goals or objectives (i.e., GI-T) and social interactions within the team (i.e., GI-S). Conversely, the measurement of the individual integration-task/social constructs reflects the athlete's attitudes and affection towards the team and its goals or objectives (i.e., ATG-T) or developing and maintaining social relationships on the team (i.e., ATG-S).

Athlete leadership is significantly related to cohesion within sport teams. For example, perceived general athlete leadership quality has been associated with both task and social cohesion (Loughead et al., 2016). Looking more specifically at athlete leader behaviors (i.e., formal and informal), Vincer and Loughead (2010) illustrated that perceptions of social support and positive feedback were associated with both task and social cohesion, while perceptions of democratic behavior were positively associated with only task cohesion. Furthermore, other literature highlights that team captains were able to cultivate task cohesion by showing genuine care and concern for followers' needs and feelings, as well as fostering acceptance for group goals (Callow, Smith, & Hardy, 2013; Smith, Arthur, & Hardy, 2009). Together, these results highlight that specific athlete leader behaviors (e.g., showing care and concern for others) are important for developing both task and socially cohesive teams.

More recently, research has highlighted the association between athlete leadership and social identity. The social identity approach to leadership (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011) suggests that group identification mediates the leader's ability to influence subsequent group outcomes. This rationale incorporates tenets from social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorization theory (Turner, 1982). Together, this approach posits that individuals define their sense of self in terms of a personal identity (i.e., sense of self as a unique group member) as well as a social identity (i.e., sense of self as a group member with shared goals and values) (Fransen, Haslam, Steffens, Vanbeselaere, & Boen, 2015; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Accordingly, the extent to which individuals categorize themselves as a group member is based on their ability to "depersonalize" from their personal identity (i.e., "I", "me"), and think of the group in

terms of a shared social identity (i.e., “we” or “us”) (Rees et al., 2015). Thus, in regard to athlete leadership, leadership effectiveness is determined by an athlete’s ability to establish and maintain a shared group identity.

Several studies have investigated the relationship between athlete leadership and social identity. For instance, Fransen and colleagues (2016) demonstrated that team identification (e.g., “I feel very connected with this team”) fully mediated the relationship between leadership (i.e., coach and athlete) and cohesion (i.e., task and social). As such, the formation of a shared social identity may be an underlying mechanism by which athlete leadership impacts cohesion within a team. Additionally, similar literature has revealed that team identification mediates the relationship between leader confidence and subsequent team member confidence (which in turn increased performance) (Fransen, Haslam, Steffens, Vanbeselaere, & Boen, 2015; Fransen, Steffens, Haslam, Vanbeselaere, Vande Broek, & Boen, 2016). Taken together, these studies suggest that increasing individuals’ identification with the group is an important avenue through which athlete leadership has an impact on subsequent group outcomes.

**Limitations of Athlete Leadership**

Previous literature provides support for the relationship between athlete leadership, cohesion, and social identity within sport teams. The majority of existent literature has examined peer athlete leadership from a transformational lens (e.g., Price & Weiss, 2011). Highlighting the ubiquity of a transformational perspective in athlete leadership literature, transformational leadership was even introduced as an antecedent for athlete outcomes in the Multidimensional Model of Leadership (Chelladurai, 2007). Generally, transformational leadership refers to a leader moving their followers beyond

self-interest in order to achieve a common goal or vision of the group (Bass, 1990). While transformational leadership is a popular theoretical framework, a servant leadership paradigm may provide a unique perspective on athlete leadership.

Compared to transformational leadership, servant leadership shifts the primary focus of the leader away from the achievement of organizational objectives toward the fulfillment of follower needs as their highest priority. In particular, servant leadership behaviors are evident in athlete leaders and may be especially relevant for those that serve in formal roles (e.g., team captains). Namely, this may be due to the fact that both servant leaders and team captains are routinely tasked with putting the needs of others (e.g., teammates) before their own. In regard to team captains, they commonly fulfill functions such as acting as a liaison between the coaching staff and players, acting as a mentor or role model for other athletes, and engaging in supportive task and social behaviors (Camiré, 2016; Dupuis, Bloom, & Loughead, 2006; Mosher, 1979; Voelker, Gould, & Crawford, 2011). Thus, shifting a leader's focus toward follower well-being and development may be an effective way to increase the positive influence that formal captains have on the team environment. For example, a team captain may stay after practice to clean up equipment, not because they are required, but because they willingly invest their time and energy for the good of their team members. In this fashion, the leader puts their own needs below the collective needs of the group, but by doing so, they facilitate the unification of the entire team.

**Potential Correlates of Servant Leadership**

Because a servant leader places their followers' needs before their own, it is sensible that servant leadership may be positively associated with both cohesion and

social identity. Both constructs involve individuals' feelings of attraction or similarity toward group membership, which may be enhanced when leaders are perceived as putting their team members first. As described above, important athlete leader behaviors that are associated with cohesion include showing genuine concern and care for team members' needs and feelings, social support and positive feedback, and fostering acceptance of group goals (Callow et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2013; Vincer & Loughead, 2010). Indeed, these behaviors fit well in a servant leadership perspective due to the leader's central focus on follower well-being. As a result of the follower focus, servant leaders are able to attenuate to the development of individual group members and allowing others to be more comfortable within the group environment. Consequently, group members may feel a higher degree of personal attraction to the group and group unification when they perceive they are supported and that they contribute to a collective purpose. For example, a team captain may take the lead developing personal relationships with individual team members to understand how each member's goals and values are integrated into the overall team goal. Collectively, servant leader behaviors may be a compelling way for athlete leaders to influence team members' perceptions of cohesion within a team.

Additionally, servant leadership may be an effective approach to promote a shared social identity within sport teams. The emphasis on a servant leader's ability to value individual group members, create a sense of community, and empower followers may be crucial to moving individuals beyond thinking in terms of "I" and to developing a sense of "we" within the team environment (Page & Wong, 2000). For example, a team captain may spend time communicating with individual members of the team to understand their skills and abilities. By establishing strong relationships with individual members of the

group, followers successively view servant leaders as role models, and demonstrate the desire to be servant leaders themselves (Greenleaf, 1977). Furthermore, the willingness of a leader to engage in self-sacrificial behaviors without the need for recognition may also be salient towards cultivating a collective sense of team unity. Servant leaders directly engage in personal sacrifice of their own immediate needs, albeit for the advancement of the collective needs of the group. For instance, a team captain may sacrifice their own personal time in order to help assimilate new team members into the group environment. Despite the potential for effectiveness of servant leadership, it has yet to be explored from a peer perspective in sport contexts.

Importantly, cohesion and social identity both share similar theoretical concepts (i.e., they both involve group member feelings of unity in relation to group membership). As such, it may be important to consider how both constructs are associated to athlete leadership in terms of group formation and development. Rees and colleagues (2015) argue that rather than seeing cohesion as necessary for group formation, it can instead act as an outcome that is influenced by the degree of social identification within the group. In other words, athlete leadership influences a group social identity that acts to bind individual members of a team together, which then results in subsequent perceptions of cohesion (e.g., similarity, closeness, attraction) (Rees et al., 2015). Previous literature has supported this rationale. For example, one study revealed that the relationship between leadership (i.e., coach and athlete) and cohesion (i.e., task and social) was fully mediated by team identification (Fransen, Decroos, Vande Broek, & Boen, 2016). As such, this suggests that an athlete leader's ability to create and maintain a shared social identity has important implications for the development of both task and social cohesion.

### Purpose

Currently, there is a lack of investigation of servant leadership from a peer perspective in sport. This may be due to the emphasis on transformational leadership as the primary lens for assessing athlete leader behavior. To the author's knowledge, only two studies have assessed servant leadership in sport. Hammermeister et al. (2008) revealed that higher perceptions of a coach as a servant leader was associated with higher athlete satisfaction in individual and team performance, enhanced interest and enjoyment, stronger athletic coping skills, and higher self-confidence. Furthermore, Rieke, Hammermeister, and Chase (2008) corroborated their findings and displayed that coach servant leadership was also associated with intrinsic motivation and increased mental toughness. However, both studies assessed servant leadership from a coach perspective. Additionally, the relationship between servant leadership and other team dynamics variables (i.e., cohesion, social identity) remain unexplored. Consequently, the purpose of the current study is to assess the relationship between peer servant leadership and cohesion. A secondary purpose is to examine whether social identity mediates the relationship between peer servant leadership and cohesion.

## Methods

### Participants

In total, 288 NCAA athletes were recruited for the present study. The sample included male ($n$ = 126, 42.7%) and female ($n$ = 147, 57.3%) participants with an age range of 18 to 23 ($M_{Age}$ = 19.41, $SD_{Age}$ = 1.09). Participants competed at the Division I ($n$ = 126, 43.8%) and Division III ($n$ = 162, 56.2%) level, and spanned a variety of sports including: soccer ($n$ = 90, 31.3%), volleyball ($n$ = 7, 2.4%), rowing ($n$ = 73, 25.4%), field

hockey (*n* = 22, 7.6%), swimming and diving (*n* = 72, 25%), rugby (*n* = 15, 15%), and gymnastics (*n* = 9, 3.1%).

**Procedures**

After receiving approval from the relevant Institutional Review Board (IRB), participants were recruited. College coaches were contacted via email with a description of the study (See Appendix A) to gain permission to contact their athletes for participation. A convenient time and location were scheduled in conjunction with the head coach. The researchers then met with individual teams in convenient locations (e.g., dressing room), and administered questionnaires to only the athletes on each team. Questionnaires contained implied consent (see Appendix B), and participants were instructed to complete the questionnaire to the best of their ability. All participation was voluntary and personal responses were kept confidential. After completion of the anonymized questionnaires, participants could not drop out because the data was non-identifiable.

**Measures**

**Servant Leadership.** Servant leadership was measured using the Revised Servant Leadership Profile for Sport (RSLP-S; Rieke, Hammermeister, & Chase, 2008). The RSLP-S is comprised of three servant leader constructs: trust/inclusion, humility, and service. The scale consists of both a perceived and preferred leader behavior profile. The perceived leader behavior profile consists of 22 items and is measured on a 7-point scale (e.g., “In the last year, my head coach serves others and does not expect anything in return”) with anchor points ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). For the purpose of current study, only the perceived leader behavior profile was included.

Additionally, the stem question was changed to reflect peer athlete leadership instead of coach leadership. For example, participants were prompted to think about the individual(s) that were appointed to a leadership role on their team, and then asked to respond to questions with the stem, "The leader(s) on our team…". The scores from the RLSP-S have displayed adequate internal consistency, with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .72 to .92 (Hammermeister et al., 2008). In the current study, all subscales demonstrated adequate levels of internal consistency ($\alpha > .80$) (See Table 1).

**Cohesion.** Cohesion was assessed using an adapted version of the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ; Carron, Widmeyer, & Brawley, 1985), which was modified to include the positive equivalent of the GEQ (Eys, Carron, Bray, & Brawley, 2007). The GEQ is an 18-item questionnaire that is comprised of four constructs: group integration-task (GI-T), group integration-social (GI-S), individual attraction to group-task (ATG-T), and individual attraction to group-social (ATG-S). The measurement of the group integration-task/social constructs reflect perceived closeness and similarity of the team as a whole with respect to team goals or objectives (GI-T, e.g., "Our team is united in trying to reach its goals for performance.") and social interactions within the team (GI-S, e.g., "Members of our team stick together outside of practice and games"). Conversely, the measurement of the individual integration-task/social constructs reflect the athlete's attitudes towards the team's goals or objectives (ATG-T, e.g., "I am happy with the amount of playing time I get.") or developing and maintaining social relationships on the team (ATG-S, e.g. "For me, this team is one of the most important social groups to which I belong to."). Responses were measured on a 7-point Likert Scale with anchor points ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Previous

research has demonstrated adequate levels of internal consistency for the GEQ (Eys et al., 2007). In the current study, all subscales, with the exception of ATG-T, demonstrated adequate levels of internal consistency ($\alpha > .70$). After consideration, the authors removed item-2 (i.e., "I am happy with the amount of playing time I get."), which was deemed more relevant toward individual athlete satisfaction. After the removal of item-2, the ATG-T demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha > .60$) (See Table 1).

**Social Identity.** Social identity was assessed using the Social Identity Questionnaire for Sport (SIQS; Bruner & Benson, 2018). The SIQS is a 12-item adapted sport questionnaire, which was originally developed by Cameron (2004). The scale measures three dimensions: cognitive centrality (e.g., "In general, being a team member is an important part of my self-image."), ingroup ties (e.g., "I have a lot in common with other members in this team."), and ingroup affect (e.g., "Generally, I feel good when I think about myself as a team member."). Responses were measured on a 7-point Likert Scale with anchor points ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Previous research has demonstrated adequate internal consistency levels for the three dimensions of social identity (e.g., Bruner & Benson, 2018). In the current study, all subscales demonstrated adequate levels of internal consistency ($\alpha > .70$) (See Table 1).

**Data Analysis**

All categorical variables were expressed in counts and percentages. Continuous variables were summarized in means and standard deviations. Prior to conducting the main analyses, Pearson correlation coefficients were conducted to examine the relationships between the dimensions of peer servant leadership, social identity, and cohesion. Next assumptions for multivariate statistical analyses were tested in three steps:

First, skewness and kurtosis of each variable were calculated. Kline (2016) recommends skewness to be below 3 and kurtosis below 10 as a cut off. Next, the presence of multivariate outliers was assessed via Cook's distances. A recommended abnormal distance is considered above 1 (Cook & Lawless, 1997). Lastly, multicollinearity was assessed via variance inflation factors (VIF) and tolerance. According to Kline (2016) a tolerance value below .10 and a VIF value above 10 indicate problematic multicollinearity.

A structural equation modeling (SEM) approach was used to answer the two research questions. The questionnaire responses were parceled at the dimension level, by using average scores. As a first step, a model predicting cohesion by peer servant leadership was created. The fit of the model was assessed via the goodness of fit indices. The following cut-off values were used: $\chi^2/df$ ratio (acceptable fit 2-3, good fit < 2; Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Müller, 2003), Incremental Fit Index (IFI, acceptable fit >.90, good fit > .95; Jaccard & Wan, 1996), Nonnormed Fit Index (NNFI or Tucker Lewis Index, acceptable fit > .90, good fit > .95; Bentler & Bonnet, 1980), Comparative Fit Index (CFI, acceptable fit > .90, good fit > .95; Bentler & Bonnet, 1980), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA, acceptable fit .05-.08, good fit .00-.05; Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). To improve the overall fit, error variances were correlated between dimensions based on theoretical relationships (i.e., dimensions under one construct) and statistical evidence (i.e., modification indices > 10, Byrne & Ragin, 2009). As a second step, both dimensions of cohesion were entered in the structural equation model. Mediation was tested using the test of joint significance (TJS; Mallinckrodt, Abraham, Wei, & Russell, 2006). This test entails checking the

significance from the paths from the predictor to the mediator and the path from the mediator to the outcome. In a simulation study, TJS provided the best balance between the chance of Type I error and statistical power (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002). To determine partial and full mediation, the change in standardized beta and associated significance between predictor and outcome variable was evaluated.

## Results

The assessment of normality of all variables revealed that all variables were sufficiently normally distributed. All skewness and kurtosis values were under 2 and 7, respectively. The assessment of Cook's distances revealed a maximum value of .32, which indicates an absence of multivariate outliers in the data. Lastly, while there were elevated VIF values between predictors (> 6), the value did not surpass the cut off indicated by Kline (2016). As such, the assumptions for SEM were met. Descriptives and assessment of normality can be found in Table 1.

The first model (1a) revealed a significant prediction of cohesion by peer servant leadership ($R^2$ = .23). The standardized regression weight was .48. Each dimension loaded well on their respective latent factors (> .60). The tested model is displayed in Figure 1. Yet, the goodness-of-fit indices showed an unsatisfactory fit of the model ($\chi 2/df$ = 10.95, CFI = .90, TLI = .84, AIC = 4643.71, RMSEA = .19, 90% CI = .16-.21, SRMR = .09). As such, the modification indices were examined. Three errors between dimensions of cohesion showed a modification index above 10. As such, these error variances were correlated. The modified model (1b) also showed a significant prediction of cohesion by servant leadership ($R^2$ = .38). The standardized regression weight was .61. Some loadings were lower than expected (i.e., Group Integration – Social = .36,

Attraction to Group – Social = .49). The remaining dimensions loaded well on their respective factors (> .70). The goodness-of-fit indices showed a satisfactory fit of the model ($\chi^2/df$ = 3.23, CFI = .98, TLI = .96, AIC = 4539.64, RMSEA = .09, 90% CI = .06-.12, *SRMR* = .05). The modified model is displayed in Figure 2.

The second model tested the mediation effect of social identity on the relationship between peer servant leadership and cohesion. The tested model (2a) is displayed in Figure 3. The analysis revealed a significant path between peer servant leadership and social identity (β = .41, $p < .001$) and social identity and cohesion (β = .92, $p < .001$). However, the path between peer servant leadership and cohesion was insignificant (β = .02, $p = .75$), indicating a full mediation effect by social identity. The explained variance of cohesion was 86%. All factors loaded well on their respective dimensions (> .6) with the exception of Group Integration – Task (.58). The goodness-of-fit indices showed an insufficient fit of the data ($\chi^2/df$ = 8.19, CFI = .88, TLI = .83, AIC = 6363.20, RMSEA = .16, 90% CI = .14-.18). As such, the modification indices were examined to improve the model fit. Again, three dimensions of cohesion showed elevated modification indices and were consequently correlated. The modified model (2b) is displayed in Figure 4. The paths between peer servant leadership and social identity (β = .40, $p < .001$) and social identity and Cohesion (β = .89, $p < .001$) remained significant. The path between peer servant leadership and cohesion remained insignificant (β = .03, $p = .49$), still indicating a full mediation effect of social identity. The explained variance of cohesion was 82%. The factor loadings were all satisfactory (> .60) with the exception of Group Integration – Task (.57) and Attraction to Group – Task (.57). The goodness-of-fit indices showed a

satisfactory fit of the data ($\chi^2/df = 5.51$, CFI = .94, TLI = .90, AIC = 6250.52, RMSEA = .12, 90% CI = .10-.14).

## Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between peer servant leadership, cohesion, and social identity in intercollegiate athletes. Structural equation modeling was used to assess the relationship between the three constructs. First, it was hypothesized that perceptions of peer servant leadership would be associated with significantly higher perceptions of task and social cohesion. In line with our hypothesis, the results indicated that peer servant leadership positively predicted cohesion. Second, we examined whether social identity mediates the relationship between peer servant leadership and cohesion. Aligned with our second hypothesis, the results revealed a full meditation of peer servant leadership and cohesion by social identity.

### Servant Leadership and Cohesion

The present study revealed a positive association between peer servant leadership and cohesion. That is, trust and inclusion, humility, and service of peer leaders may be associated with teammate perceptions of similarity, closeness, and unity within their teams (Carron et al., 1985; Hammermeister et al., 2008). In regard to specific formal captain behaviors, this could include the leader listening actively and receptively to others, delegating salient responsibilities to other team members, and earnestly engaging in personal sacrifice for the good of the collective team. Thus, by engaging in servant leader behaviors, which prioritize team member needs (Greenleaf, 1977; van Dierendonck, 2011), the captain is able to influence a more cohesive team environment (Loughead et al., 2016). Our results support previous literature illustrating that athlete

leadership positively influences perceptions of cohesion within sport teams (Callow et al., 2009; Crozier, Loughead, & Munroe-Chandler, 2013; Loughead et al., 2016; Price & Weiss, 2011, 2013; Vincer & Loughead, 2010). In particular, these studies have highlighted that athlete leader behaviors such as providing training and instruction, social support, showing care and concern, and exhibiting transformational leader behaviors (e.g., problem-solving, autonomy supportive) are positively associated with task and social cohesion. Additionally, our results suggest that important interpersonal qualities (i.e., trust, humility, service) are salient for leadership and cohesion within collegiate sport teams.

Moreover, the present study extends previous athlete leader literature by assessing the influence of peer leadership through a servant leader perspective. While a transformational leadership framework is useful for examining effective peer leader behavior (e.g., Callow et al., 2009; Price & Weiss, 2011, 2013), servant leadership provides a unique perspective by highlighting a focus on shared leadership and follower well-being. Accordingly, our results suggest that it may be important for formal athlete leaders to cultivate trust with teammates, act with humility, and engage in service towards individual team members and the collective group to foster cohesion within the team environment. Therefore, by sharing power and showing care and concern for others, athlete leaders will be able to positively influence perceptions of similarity, bonding, and unity within the team.

An important consideration is the perspective from which athlete leadership is perceived. For example, the perception of athlete leadership within a team may vary depending on whether it is viewed through a formal or informal perspective (Burkett,

Bloom, Razon, & Johnson, 2014; Loughead et al., 2006). In previous studies, athlete leadership has been assessed through a self-reported leadership inventory (e.g., Price & Weiss, 2011, 2013) and included general perceptions of both informal and formal athlete leaders (e.g., Vincer & Loughead, 2010). Our study provides an alternative perspective by focusing explicitly on the perceptions of formal team captains. This rationale was chosen due to common expectations and responsibilities specific to team captains such as being a liaison and communicating openly with coaches and teammates (Dupuis et al., 2006). As such, the results suggest that behaviors of trust and inclusion, humility, and service towards others may be athlete leader behaviors that add to the effectiveness of formal team captains. However, their effectiveness may not be limited to just formal leaders.

Collectively, the findings suggest that formal athlete leaders' behavior may impact important group processes, such as cohesion. It should be noted that some literature suggests that informal leaders rather than team captains are perceived as having the strongest impact on the team (Fransen et al., 2014). In fact, Fransen and colleagues (2014) illustrated that team captains were seen as the primary leader across four leadership roles (i.e., task, social, external, motivational) in only 1% of teams. They argue for the notion of shared leadership among multiple informal leaders. Indeed, leadership is shared among informal and formal athlete leaders. However, our results add to this perspective of shared leadership, specifically highlighting the salient impact of the team captain. Considering the emphasis on trust, humility, and inclusion, servant leadership moves away from traditional hierarchical structures where the team captain is perceived as residing above their teammates. Rather, servant leaders delegate responsibility and

share power, which acts as a way to empower followers (Russell, 2001). Empowerment emphasizes teamwork and demonstrates trust and equality, which allow an avenue for followers to become leaders themselves (Greenleaf, 1977; Russell, 2001). In effect, athlete leaders who willingly delegate responsibility (e.g., letting others run a warm-up) empower their teammates by demonstrating mutual trust, and they provide an opportunity for teammates' personal growth and development. As a result, empowering followers through servant leadership behaviors may add a unique perspective to explain how athlete leaders impact cohesion within the group environment.

**Mediation of Social Identity**

Social identity fully mediated the relationship between peer servant leadership and cohesion. The association of peer servant leadership on facilitating cohesion is contingent upon the formation of a team's shared social identity. Facilitating team members' perceptions of similarity and belongingness with other group members (i.e., ingroup ties), the importance of being a group member (i.e., cognitive centrality), and positive feelings associated with being a part of the group (i.e., in group affect) is a pathway through which peer servant leadership influences cohesion within sport teams (Bruner & Benson, 2018). This reflects the notion that when leaders are perceived to embody "who we are" and act in accordance with the shared interest of the group, they are able to influence the environment around them (Rees et al., 2015). Specifically, it appears that a team captain's display of servant leader behavior may be perceived by teammates as the leader acting in congruence with collective team interests and furthering team goals, which thus fosters perceptions of cohesion. For example, a team captain that facilitates participative decision making and sacrifices time to understand other

teammates' perspectives may be perceived as embodying and acting on a collective "team first" mentality.

Generally, these results provide theoretical support for the perspective that athlete leadership is more effective when members have a strengthened identification with the group. For example, team identification mediates the relationship between leadership and team dynamics including cohesion (Fransen et al., 2015), teammate confidence (Fransen et al., 2014), and fostering effort (De Cuyper, Boen, Beirendonck, Vanbeselaere, & Fransen, 2016). In particular, our findings corroborate Fransen et al. (2015), which illustrated that social identity meditates the relationship between athlete leadership and cohesion within sport teams. Further, our results extended their findings to perceptions of formal athlete leadership, as opposed to including perceptions both informal and formal. Accordingly, this suggests that formal team captains may have the ability to cultivate and maintain a social identity within a team, which thus impacts perceptions of cohesion.

However, similar to a point mentioned above, only De Cuyper et al. (2016) examined perceptions of formal captain leadership, which was assessed via a transformational lens. They demonstrated that the dimension of idealized influence, which captures a captain's perceived willingness to sacrifice self-interest for team interest, was the main predictor of team identification. As such, this may suggest that leaders are seen as more effective, and in turn strengthen identification with the group, when they are seen as making personal sacrifices on behalf of the collective group (Haslam et al., 2011). This finding aligns well with a servant leadership perspective where the primary focus of the leader is to serve their followers first (Greenleaf, 1977).

Thus, our results support the notion that formal team captains who display servant leader behavior are able to influence group outcomes by strengthening social identity.

Another point of consideration is how follower-oriented leadership styles (i.e., servant leadership) supplement the social identity approach to leadership (Haslam, 2004). One explanation may be due to a servant leader's ability to enhance social attraction by conducting behavior of a highly prototypical member (Hogg, 2001). When leaders are seen as acting on behalf of the group (i.e., being "one of us"), they become more socially attractive and legitimate to other ingroup members (Hogg, 2001). As such, when servant leaders are perceived as trustworthy, humble, and willing to sacrifice for the collective good of the group, they may be more likely to be viewed as embodying "who we are" and being "one of us". Therefore, they are effectively able influence the shared identity of the team. Once a shared identity is created, it creates a sense of togetherness between group members and leads to increased perceptions in trust, cooperation, and social support (Reicher, Haslam, Platow, 2018), thus potentially influencing perceptions of cohesiveness. Taken together, servant leadership may be an effective approach in sport contexts whereby the leader (i.e., team captain) is able to establish, and act on, a shared group identity, which in turn impacts subsequent group outcomes (e.g., cohesion).

**Applied Implications**

These findings have practical implications for coaches, athletes, and sport psychology practitioners. First, in regard to coaches, the results provide important information for formal captain selection. The study highlights specific servant leader behaviors that may facilitate perceptions of a collective social identity, and thus, lead to more cohesive team environments. As such, it may be beneficial for coaches to elect

formal athlete leaders that are trusted by other team members that actively show care and concern for others, and who often demonstrate the willingness to sacrifice self-interest for the common good of the group. Within this vein, these results highlight the notion of shared leadership within teams as opposed to traditional hierarchical leadership structures. Consequently, coaches may wish to elect multiple formal leaders, perhaps ranging in age, to demonstrate that leadership is shared across the team, as opposed to the top down. In this fashion, it may reinforce that the leader's primary responsibility is to serve the collective needs of other team members and the team as a whole. Finally, our results demonstrate that cultivating a collective social identity is an important pathway for leaders to create cohesive team environments. Therefore, coaches should utilize team-building strategies that focus on the team's ability to create a collective sense of "we". For example, having unique team apparel or a team motto may help facilitate an increased sense of groupness and develop an "us versus them" mentality (Paradis & Martin, 2012). Perceptions of groupness (i.e., extent to which an athlete perceives their team represents a group) have also been shown to positively predict social identity (Martin, Balderson, Hawkins, Wilson, & Bruner, 2017). Taken together, cultivating a sense of togetherness may increase perceptions of identification with the group and foster perceptions of cohesion among team members.

Similar to coaches, athlete leaders may also utilize team-building strategies that aim to enhance a sense of togetherness. For example, by strengthening team members' identification with the group, athlete leaders may be able to cultivate more cohesive team environments. Furthermore, rather than viewing their position as one of power, it may be beneficial for formal athlete leaders to delegate leadership responsibilities to other

members of the team. For instance, a formal captain could designate a younger team member to lead the warm-up or cool down before or after practice. Consequently, the captain demonstrates trust in other team members' capabilities and a willingness to sacrifice personal power for in lieu of follower growth. Off of the field, it would be pertinent for the captain to invest time developing personal relationships with individual members of the team. By showing care and concern for individual team members, it may allow others to feel more closely tied to the team, thus strengthening perceptions of team identification.

Finally, our results have a practical application for sport psychology practitioners. One area includes connecting the development and implementation of team-building interventions to athlete leadership in a more purposeful manner. Given that leadership effectiveness is contingent on members' identification with the group (Rees et al., 2015), practitioners may wish to give consideration to how the team captain is integrated into the team-building session. For example, during a team-building exercise, a team captain could be instructed to consciously reflect on how their actions represent or align with the shared group identity. Additionally, while team building interventions are often employed to enhance group outcomes, (e.g., cohesion), at times it can be difficult for practitioners to assess the area in which their team may need to improve (Paradis & Martin, 2012). As such, helping a team foster a shared social identity may be one avenue for building cohesion within sport teams. Furthermore, our results may help practitioners develop and facilitate leadership development programs, especially those with a focus on formal captain leadership training. Previous research demonstrates that a common challenge for team captains is their ability to balance and facilitate relationships with coaches and

teammates, and they recommend that future captains should emphasize developing strong relationships with teammates (Gould, Voelker, & Griffes, 2013; Voelker et al., 2011). Consequently, it may be important for leadership development programs to place an emphasis on shared leadership and cultivating ways to strengthen interpersonal relationships between the captain and their teammates.

**Limitations**

Despite the implications of the current study, limitations should be considered. First, the current study was cross-sectional and correlational in nature, which prohibits the ability to detect longitudinal trends and draw causation from the results. While we assume that peer servant leadership predicts cohesion through the pathway of social identity, it is possible that cohesion within a team predicts the type of leaders that emerge. Nonetheless, previous literature supports the directionality of our results (e.g., Fransen et al., 2015; Vincer & Loughead, 2010). Second, leadership was measured in a variety of sport teams, which were at different time points in their respective seasons (i.e., preseason, in-season, out of season). As such, perceptions of leadership may have been influenced by contextual variables such as the win-loss record over the duration of the season. Future studies could assess perceptions of leadership at different time points to account for how these perceptions change over time. Furthermore, a structural equation modeling approach was chosen, which does not indicate which subdimensions may have been more or less influential in the analyses. As a result, this limits the detail with which we are able to interpret the results and should warrant caution when doing so. Finally, while the current study included participants from the NCAA Division I and III level,

further investigation is required to generalize the findings to other populations (i.e., youth, elite).

**Future Directions**

The current study provides a number of avenues for future research questions. First, though our study focused on the formal peer leadership, an area for future study could include examining the presence and impact of servant leader behaviors in informal leaders as well as formal team captains. Additionally, it may be beneficial to explore how perceptions of formal athlete leadership are related to dimensions of task and social cohesion, separately, rather than both dimensions combined as one construct. Relative to the correlations between constructs, it appears social cohesion may have a stronger association with peer servant leadership and social identity compared to task cohesion. As such, this may emphasize servant leadership's focus on building strong interpersonal relationships, which may attend specifically to perceptions of closeness in relation social relationships. Furthermore, it may be beneficial to assess how team captains are elected (e.g., democratic vote, selected by vote), which may in turn impact perceptions of the extent to which leaders are seen to embody "who we are". Due to the correlational nature of our study, causality cannot be tested. This may be the objective of future research**.** For example, a future study could implement an intervention-based design which is aimed to assess how the presence, or lack thereof, of a collective social identity impacts cohesion within a team. Finally, a future study could assess the differences in the relationship between peer servant leadership, cohesion, and social identity for both team and individual sports.

**Summary**

In light of these limitations, the current study adds insight to the existing literature on athlete leadership. In particular, this study supports the effectiveness of servant leadership in sport contexts (Hammermeister et al., 2008; Rieke et al., 2008) and extends previous findings by assessing servant leadership from an athlete leader perspective. Furthermore, the results corroborated previous findings that social identity mediates the relationship between athlete leadership and cohesion (Fransen et al., 2015). As such, this provides an avenue for coaches and athletes to foster a collective sense of "we", which may in turn lead to more cohesive environments. Future directions should aim to replicate the current findings, as well as investigate other mechanisms that contribute to the athlete leaders' ability to positively influence the team environment.

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Table 1

*Dimension Descriptives, Skewness, Kurtosis, and Internal Consistency*

| Dimension | Mean (SD) | Skewness | Kurtosis | Cronbach's α |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| RSLP-S – Trust | 5.40 (1.14) | -.64 | -.19 | .95 |
| RSLP-S – Humility | 5.03 (1.20) | -.49 | -.13 | .86 |
| RSLP-S – Service | 5.36 (1.14) | -.70 | .37 | .88 |
| GEQ – Attraction to Group Social | 6.30 (.85) | -2.12 | 6.01 | .78 |
| GEQ – Attraction to Group Task | 5.77 (.95) | -1.13 | 1.11 | .64 |
| GEQ – Group Integration Social | 5.90 (.93) | -1.16 | 1.97 | .78 |
| GEQ – Group Integration Task | 5.61 (.98) | -.90 | 1.30 | .86 |
| SIQS – Ingroup Ties | 5.95 (1.00) | -1.38 | 2.34 | .85 |
| SIQS – Cognitive Centrality | 5.84 (1.01) | -1.09 | .95 | .80 |
| SIQS – Ingroup Affect | 6.27 (.75) | -1.19 | 1.11 | .80 |

*Note:* N=288, Revised Servant Leadership Profile for Sport (RLSP-S), Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ), Social Identity Questionnaire for Sport (SIQS)

Table 2

*Correlations Between Dimensions and Variance Inflation Factors*

| Dimension | VIF | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. | 7. | 8. | 9. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. RSLP – Trust | 3.34 | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. RSLP – Humility | 5.43 | .83** | | | | | | | | |
| 3. RSLP – Service | 5.87 | .89** | .81** | | | | | | | |
| 4. GEQ – Attraction to Group Social | 1.79 | .40** | .31** | .39** | | | | | | |
| 5. GEQ – Attraction to Group Task | 1.82 | .29** | .21** | .24** | .48** | | | | | |
| 6. GEQ – Group Integration Social | 1.96 | .44** | .39** | .43** | .59** | .35** | | | | |
| 7. GEQ – Group Integration Task | 2.01 | .12* | .06 | .06 | .37** | .60** | .55** | | | |
| 8. SIQS – Ingroup Ties | 2.15 | .31** | .25** | .30** | .42** | .76** | .41** | .53** | | |
| 9. SIQS – Cognitive Centrality | 1.71 | .27** | .27** | .30** | .36** | .47** | .30** | .36** | .63** | |
| 10. SIQS – Ingroup Affection | 1.82 | .41** | .32** | .38** | .54** | .60** | .46** | .40** | .65** | .52** |

*Note*: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 3

*Factor Loadings*

| Dimension | Model 1a | Model 1b | Model 2a | Model 2b |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. RSLP – Trust | .96 | .96 | .96 | .96 |
| 2. RSLP – Humility | .86 | .86 | .86 | .86 |
| 3. RSLP – Service | .93 | .94 | .94 | .94 |
| 4. GEQ – Attraction to Group Social | .62 | .49 | .84 | .90 |
| 5. GEQ – Attraction to Group Task | .72 | .71 | .62 | .56 |
| 6. GEQ – Group Integration Social | .65 | .36 | .68 | .65 |
| 7. GEQ – Group Integration Task | .78 | .79 | .58 | .57 |
| 8. SIQS – Ingroup Ties | | | .88 | .90 |
| 9. SIQS – Cognitive Centrality | | | .67 | .66 |
| 10. SIQS – Ingroup Affection | | | .76 | .75 |

Table 4

*Goodness of Fit Indices*

| | $\chi^2$ | df | $\chi^2$/df | CFI | TLI | RMSEA (90% CIs) | SRMR | AIC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model 1a | 142.37 | 13 | 10.95 | .90 | .84 | .19 (.16-.21) | .09 | 4643.71 |
| Model 1b | 32.30 | 10 | 3.23 | .98 | .96 | .09 (.06-.12) | .05 | 4539.64 |
| Model 2a | 262.08 | 32 | 8.19 | .88 | .83 | .16 (.14-.18) | .09 | 6363.20 |
| Model 2b | 143.40 | 29 | 4.94 | .94 | .91 | .12 (.10-.14) | .09 | 6250.52 |

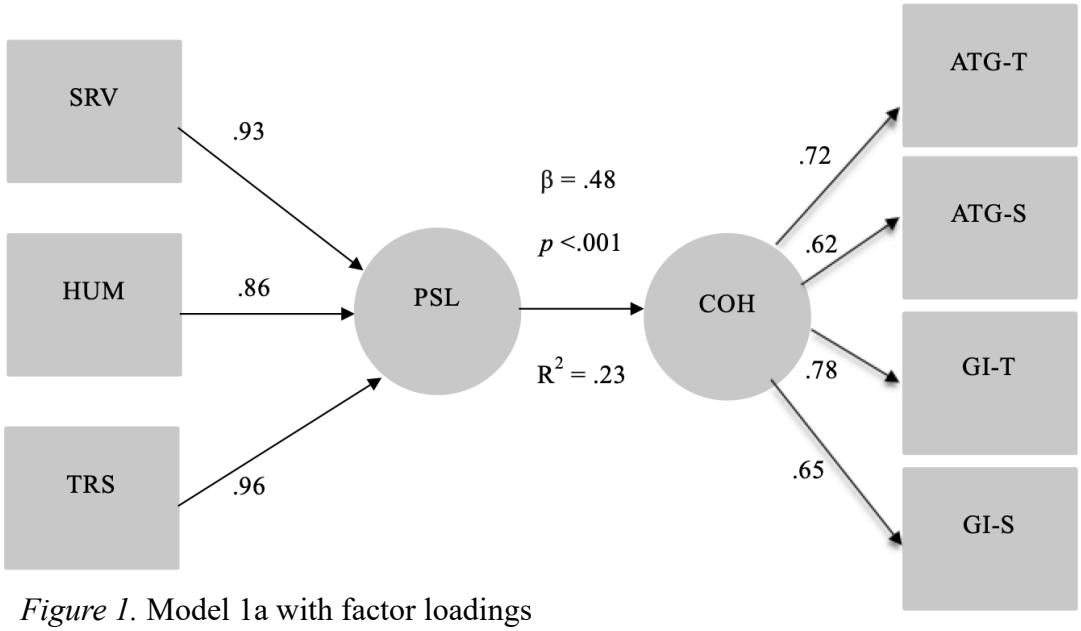


*Figure 1.* Model 1a with factor loadings

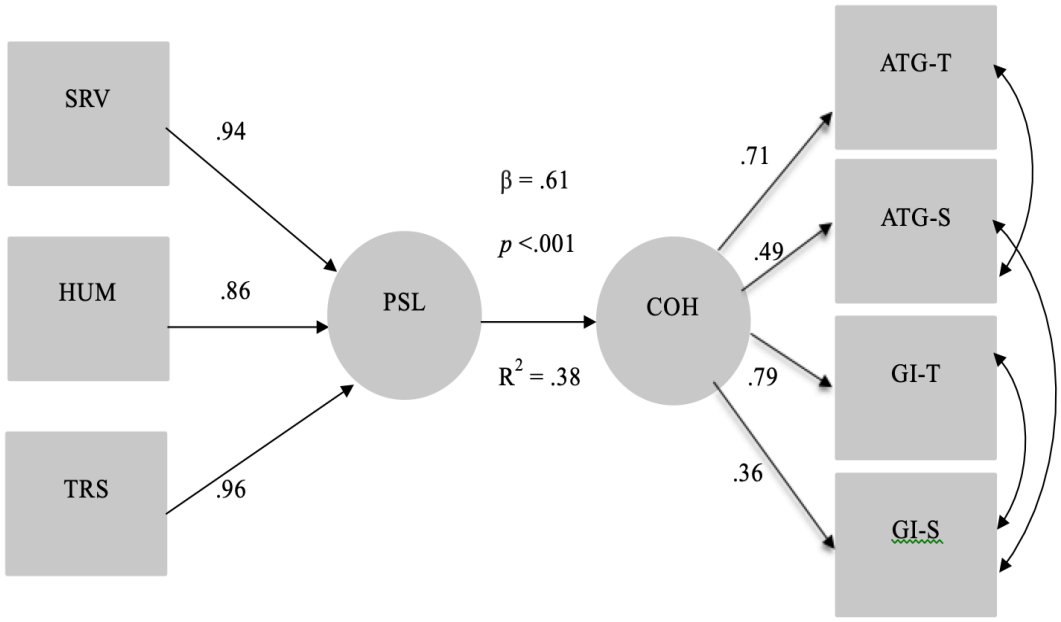


*Figure 2.* Model 1b with factor loadings

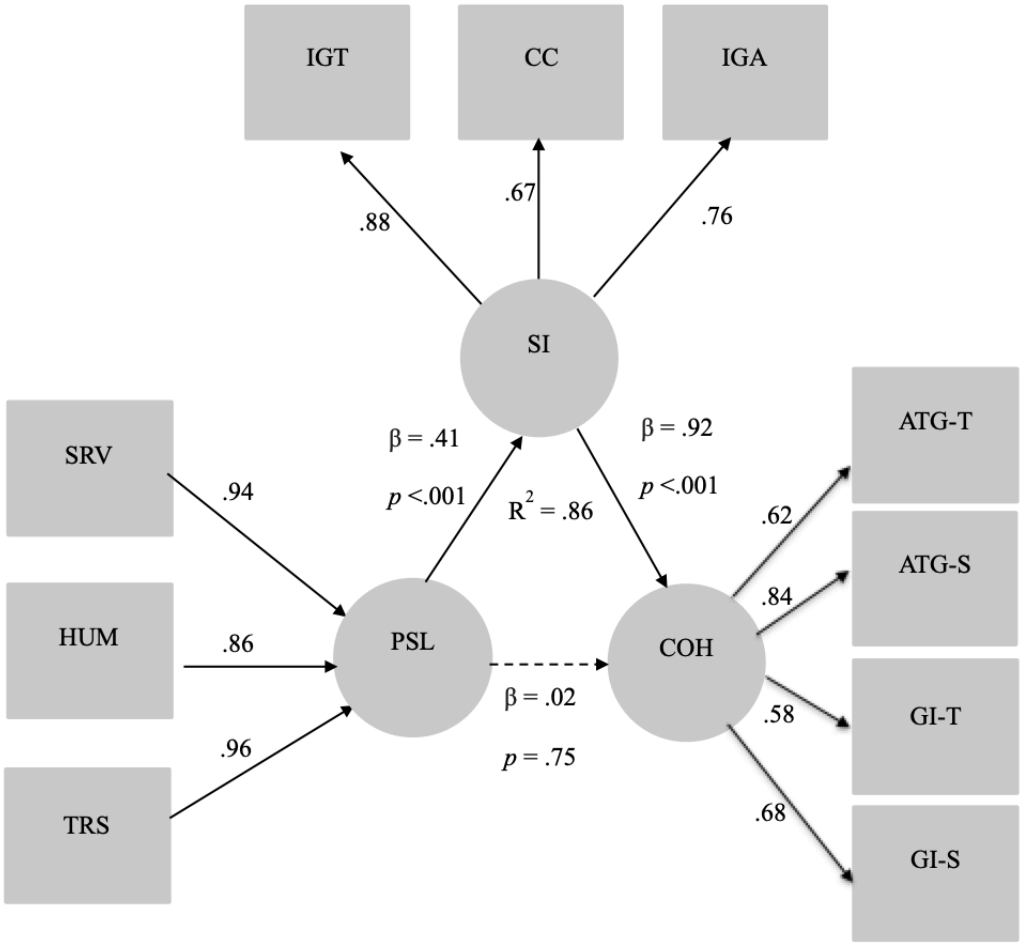


*Figure 3.* Model 2a with Factor Loadings

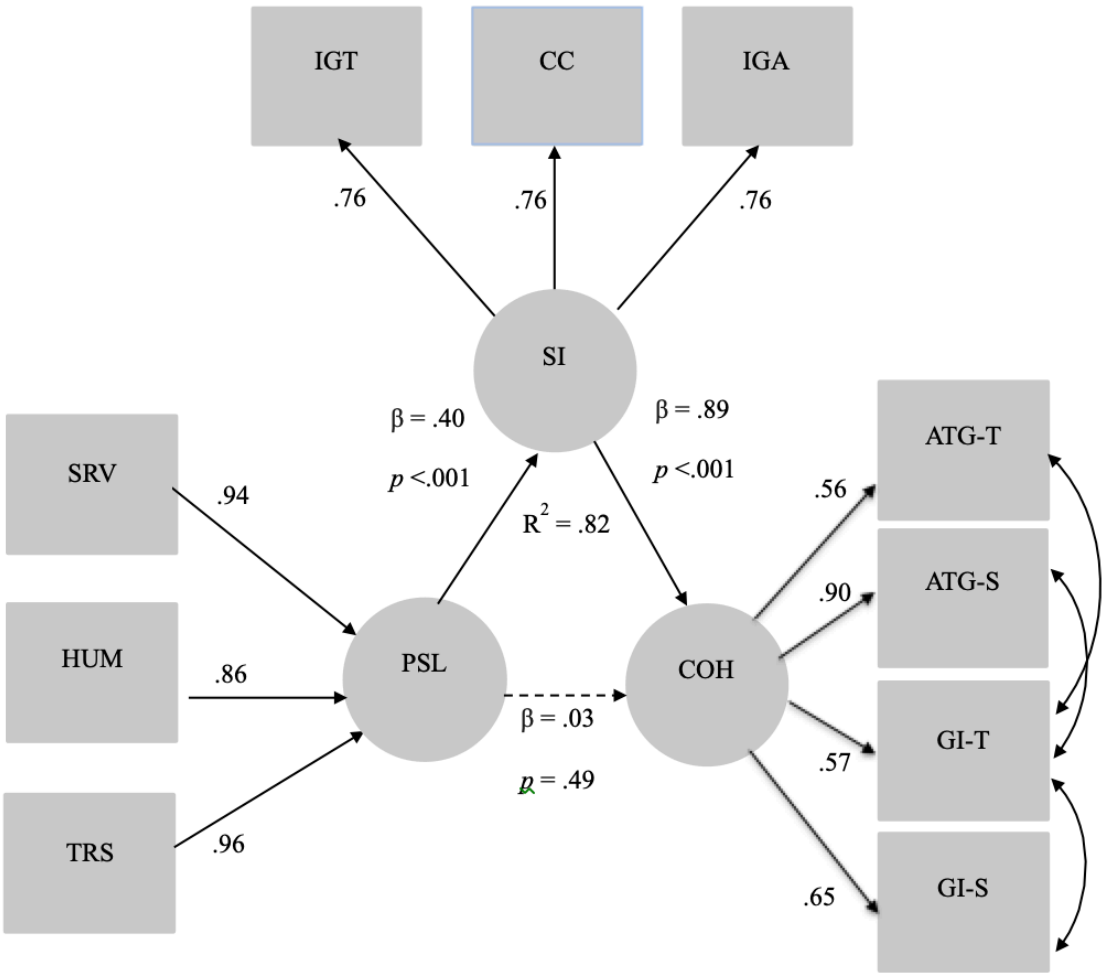


*Figure 4.* Model 2b with Factor Loadings

# APPENDIX A

## DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

Hello Coach –

You are receiving this email requesting your athlete's participation in a research study on peer leadership. The purpose of the research study is to understand the relationship between peer servant leadership and team dynamic variables within intercollegiate athletics. In the following study, your athletes will be asked basic demographic information along with perceptions of peer leadership and other team dynamic factors.

If you are willing and interested in allowing your athletes to participate in the study, please email me back to arrange your participation. I will do everything I can to accommodate your team's busy schedule. However, the time commitment to complete the questionnaires shouldn't exceed 20 minutes. I appreciate your time and thoughtful consideration.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at:

Justin Worley, Graduate Student
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APPENDIX B

IMPLIED CONSENT

**The Relationship Between Peer-Servant Leadership, Team Cohesion, and Athlete Satisfaction in Intercollegiate Athletes**

1. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current study is to explore peer leadership in intercollegiate student-athletes. To date, assessment of peer servant leadership is sparse in sport contexts. As such, the purpose of the current study is to assess peer servant leadership within intercollegiate student-athletes and explore how servant leadership is associated with a number group dynamic variables.

2. Benefits of the Study

There is no direct benefit of this study to you. However, scientific benefits of the study include a better understanding of perceptions of peer servant leadership within teams of intercollegiate student-athletes. Particularly, the investigation of peer servant leadership will provide practical insights into important qualities for leader selection and development, as well as highlight how certain leader characteristics are related to group variables. Knowledge will contribute to our understanding of peer leadership in athletics.

3. What You Will Be Asked to Do

You will be asked to complete a series of questionnaires to the best of your abilities once you consented to your participation. You may skip, or withdraw from the study at any time during the duration of the allotted period for questionnaires to be completed. After completion and submission of your questionnaire, you cannot withdraw from the study anymore because data will be collected anonymously. After submission, no one will be able to link your identity with the submitted questionnaire anymore. Completing the questionnaire should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. Questionnaires will be allocated in person by the researcher or completed via Qualtrics.

4. Risks

Minimal to no risks are associated with this study. In the unlikely event that you may experience discomfort completing the questionnaire, you may discontinue participation.

5. If You Would Like More Information about the Study

You will be notified to ask the researcher any questions regarding the study prior to, or during the allotted time for the questionnaires to be completed. The researcher will answer any question to the best of his abilities. If questions arise after completion of the study you will be notified to contact the researcher, or the researcher's advisors via email with any questions.

Justin Worley, Graduate Student
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Or my faculty advisors:
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6. Withdrawal from the Study

You may skip any questions if you feel uncomfortable answering them. You may also withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. After the submission of the questionnaire, withdrawal will be impossible because no one (including the researchers) will be able to link your data to your identity anymore.

7. How the Data will be Maintained in Confidence

No identifiable information will be collected. Data will be collected anonymously and kept confidential. In addition, data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the faculty advisor's office for three years. Online data collection will be kept confidential through a password protected file via Qualtrics in the graduate research laboratory at Ithaca College. Data will be kept for three years upon completion of data collection. After three years, data will be destroyed.

**I have read the above and I understand its contents. I agree and provide IMPLIED CONSENT to participate in the study. I AGREE THAT I AM 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER.** PLEASE DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THIS SURVEY.

You may tear off this page for your records or return the survey with the page still connected. Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Division of NCAA Athletics: □ 1 □ 2 □ 3

2. Current Academic Year: □ Freshmen □ Sophomore □ Junior □ Senior

3. Gender Identity: □ Male □ Female □ Prefer not to say □ Other: _____

4. Your Age: _____

5. Current Intercollegiate Institution: _____

6. Current Intercollegiate Sport: _____

7. Which part of the season is your team in? □ preseason □ in-season □ post-season

8. Are you currently a starter on your intercollegiate team? □ yes □ no

9. How many years have you been with your intercollegiate team? _____

10. What was your record in the past season (Wins-Losses-Draws)? ____ - ____ - ____

11. Are you currently a "starter" on your intercollegiate athletic team?
Yes No

APPENDIX D

REVISED SERVANT LEADERSHIP PROFILE FOR SPORT

**Section VI – Below is a list of statements related to the leader(s) on your team. Think about the teammate(s) that is/are appointed to a leadership role on your team. This could be a formal team captain or a leadership council/group. <u>Please circle the number for each question that corresponds with your perception best.</u>**

| **Think about the individual(s) that have been appointed to a leadership role on your team. The leader(s) on our team…** | **Not True At All** | | | | | | **Extremely True** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. ...inspire team spirit by communicating enthusiasm and confidence. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. ...believe the leader(s) should not be front and center. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. ...serve others and do not expect anything in return. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. ...listen actively and receptively to others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. ...is not primarily concerned with always having full authority. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. ...practice plain talking (means what they say and say what they mean). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. ...always keep their promises and commitment to others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. ...don't have to have their name attached to every initiative. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. ...are willing to make personal sacrifices in serving others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. ...grant all players a fair amount of responsibility. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11. ...willing to accept other's ideas whenever they are better than their own. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12. ...don't look at their position as one of power. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13. ...find enjoyment in serving others in whatever role or capacity. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14. ...promote tolerance, kindness, and honesty. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 15. ...create a climate of trust and openness to facilitate participation in decision making. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 16. ...allow their subordinates to have some control. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 17. ...have a heart to serve others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 18. ...want to build trust through honesty and empathy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 19. ...devote a lot of energy to promoting trust, mutual understanding, and team spirit. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 20. ...don't have to be seen as superior to subordinates in everything. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 21. …take great satisfaction in bringing out the best in others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 22. …has the courage to assume responsibility for their mistakes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

APPENDIX E

GROUP ENVIRONMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

**Section II – The following section is designed to measure your cohesion within the team. <u>Please circle the number for each question that corresponds with your perception best.</u>**

| **The following questions are designed to assess your feelings about your personal involvement with your team.** | **Strongly Disagree** | | | | | | **Strongly Agree** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I enjoy being a part of the social activities of this team | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. I'm happy with the amount of playing time I get | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. I am going to miss the members of this team when the season ends | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. I'm happy with my team's level of desire to win | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. Some of my best friends are on this team | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. This team gives me enough opportunities to improve my personal performance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. I enjoy team parties more than other parties | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. I do like the style of play on this team | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. For me this team is one of the most important social groups to which I belong | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. Our team is united in trying to reach its goals for performance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11. Members of our team would rather go out together as a team than on our own | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12. We all take responsibility for any loss or poor performance by our team | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13. Our team members always party together | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14. Our team members have the same aspirations for the team's performance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 15. Our team would like to spend time together in the off season | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 16. If members of our team have problems in practice, everyone wants to help them so we can get it back together again | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 17. Members of our team stick together outside of practices and games | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 18. Our team members communicate freely about each athlete's responsibilities during competition and practice | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

APPENDIX F

SOCIAL IDENTITY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SPORT

**Section VII – Below is a list of statements that reflect how you feel being a part of your team. <u>Please circle the number for each question that corresponds with your perception best.</u>**

| **The following questions are designed to assess your feelings about being a part your team.** | **Strongly Disagree** | | | | | | **Strongly Agree** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I have a lot in common with other members in this team. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. I often think about the fact that I am a team member. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. In general, I am glad to be a member of this team. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. I feel strong ties to other members of this team. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. Overall, being a member of this team has a lot to do with how I feel about myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. I often regret that I am a member of this team. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. I find it easy to form a bond with other members of this team. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. In general, being a member of this team is part of my self-image. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. I feel good about being a member of this team. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. I feel a sense of being “connected” with other members of this team. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11.The fact that I am a member of this team often enter my mind. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12. Generally, I feel good when I think about myself as a member of this team. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |